SONGS OF NAROPA



THRANGU RINPOCHE

Songs of Naropa

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Songs of Naropa

Thrangu Rinpoche

COMMENTARIES ON SONGS OF REALIZATION

Translated from Tibetan by Erik Pema Kunsang
Edited by Marcia Binder Schmidt
with Kerry Moran



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Contents



Foreword



The main practice in the Kagyü teaching system is Mahamudra. The lineage of Mahamudra chiefly comes through Marpa Lotsawa's two root gurus, Naropa and Maitripa. The texts explained here — *A Summary of Mahamudra* and *The View, Concisely Put* — were spoken by Naropa.

Naropa's songs are very important for practitioners of Mahamudra, pithy words, rich with meaning. This is why I chose to teach them during my courses. The songs and my explanations are now translated by lotsawa Erik. These teachings are about essential meditation training. I consider them very important for future students to pay attention to and study. Doing so will greatly benefit one's understanding of the key points of Mahamudra.

—Thrangu Rinpoche

The View, Concisely Put



The View, Concisely Put



In Sanskrit: *Adhi Siddhi Sama Nama*
In Tibetan: *lta ba mdor bsdus pa zhes bya ba*,
[*Tawa Dordüpa*].
In English: *The View, Concisely Put*.

Homage to the Vajra Dakini!

To the omniscient lord of refuge,
The protector of beings, I pay homage!

After pursuing statements and reasoning
I have condensed and established the true meaning.

All these apparent and existing phenomena
Are nowhere apart from mind, your own awareness.
Since it perceives and is cognizant,
It is like experience that is self-known.

If this mind was not like that
There would be no link and therefore no experience.
This is how I have established the relative:
"Understand that all phenomena are based on mind," as it is said.

The very basis of phenomena, which is mind essence,
Can be analyzed, dissected with reasoning, and so forth,
But this naturally luminous mind
And the momentary defilement of thought, these two,
Whether they are one or different
Is a topic of extreme profundity.
Because of this depth, scholars analyze.
Though they explain, I shall not write about it here.

This mind that knows emptiness
Is itself the awakened mind, bodhichitta.
The buddha potential is just this.
The sugata essence is just this.

Because of tasting what is,
It is also the great bliss.
The understanding of Secret Mantra is just this.
Means and knowledge is just this.

The vast and profound is just this.
Samantabhadra with consort is just this.
This space and wisdom, perceiving while being empty,
Is what is called 'knowing original enlightenment.'

This self-knowing, while one is still defiled,
Does not depend on other things,
So self-existing wakefulness is just this.

Being aware, it is cognizance.
A natural knowing that is free of thought.
This self-knowing cannot possibly form thoughts.

Without conceptualizing a 'mind,'
Since it is not something to be conceived,

This original wakefulness, cognizant yet thought-free,
Is like the wisdom of the Tathagata.

Therefore, it is taught, "Realize that luminous mind
Is the mind of original wakefulness,
And don't seek an enlightenment separate from that."

Nevertheless, this mind does become disturbed
By the defilement of momentary thoughts.
Like water, like gold, like the sky,
It may be either pure or impure.

But the naturally luminous mind
Is free from even a hair-tip of concrete substance,
Like the analogy of a sky flower.

It does not exist as it seems to be,
Therefore, it cannot be established to be nonexistent.
As everything is mutually dependent,
When one side is invalid, the other side also does not
exist.

Mind is neither existent nor nonexistent,
Since each of these [constructs] is negated.
It is also not both,
Since existing and not existing are a contradiction.
It is not a living being
Nor other than living beings.

Therefore, it is free from all constructs.
This is how I have established the ultimate:
"Mind is based on space," as it is said.

This unconstructed self-knowing
Perceives while empty, and while empty it perceives.

Experience and emptiness are therefore indivisible,
Like the analogy of the moon in water.
This is how I have established nonduality:
"Space is not based on anything," as it is said.

This unconstructed self-knowing
Is itself the very basis of samsara.
Nirvana as well is also just this.
The Great Middle Way is also just this.
That to be seen is also just this.
That to train in is also just this.
That to attain is also just this.
The valid truth is also just this.

The renowned threefold tantras
Of basic cause, method, and result,
And what is known as ground, path, and fruition,
Are just different situations of this.

The basic consciousness, the all-ground,
And all possible aggregates in samsara,
Are known as the 'dependent,' and so forth.

Emaho!
The creations of this mind essence, while one is still
defiled,
The six classes of beings, and so forth,
Extending to the bounds of space,
Are the magical machinery of suffering, which surpasses
the grasp of thought.

This unconstructed self-knowing itself
Which is free from the defilement of thought,
Is the nondwelling nirvana.

The Vajra Being is also just this.
The Sixth Buddha is also just this.
The six families are also just this.
Manjushri Kumara is just this.
Vairochana is just this.

Dharmakaya, the great bliss,
And the state of unity are also just this.
This itself is the fourth empowerment.
Innate joy is also just this.
Natural purity is also just this.

All these and other different indicators
Known from the sutras and the tantras,
Are for the most part based on this;
Simply combined with this in whichever way is suitable.

Emaho!
The creations of this undefiled mind essence,
What comprises the kayas of form:
The buddhafields of utter purity,
The magically created mandalas, and so forth —
All these creations of great wonder —
Appear, extending to the bounds of space.

The non-Buddhist Tirthikas,
In their ignorance of mind itself,
Are submerged in an ocean of erroneous philosophy
Involving a self, a supreme godhead, and the like.

The schools of Buddhism, such as the shravakas,
The pratyekabuddhas, and the followers of Mind Only,
Maintain the duality of perceiver and perceived,
And conceptualize nonduality as being the true.

Moreover, they get caught in the web of concepts
Such as whether the perceived is real or false.

By not mistaking the view in this way,
You attain enlightenment through the meditation
training and conduct,
That are in harmony with the real,
Just like a well-trained race horse.

Unless you are in harmony with the real view,
Your meditation training and conduct will be mistaken
And you will not attain fruition,
Like a blind man without a guide.

How can my conceptual mind, [limited in its
perceptions] like a frog in a well,
Discover the profundity by stirring up
The ocean-like depth of the true meaning!
May all learned masters forgive my errors!

Through whatever goodness there is from writing this
May the stain of delusion be fully cleared away
In fortunate and worthy beings,
And may the knowledge of realization grow forth!

This completes *The View, Concisely Put* by Naropa.

In the presence of the pandita Jnana Siddhi, this was translated and corrected by the lotsawa Marpa Chökyi Lodrö.✦

1



I AM VERY HAPPY FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY to teach the Dharma, and especially to explain two of Naropa's songs of realization: the *Song of Naropa* and the *Summary of Mahamudra.* It is both important and necessary to study and reflect upon such extraordinary teachings on the view of Mahamudra. When put into practice these instructions are incredibly effective. However, please remember that together with a high view, it is the responsibility of each practitioner to maintain a accordingly conscientious conduct. Be very careful about your behavior. Please don't profess to maintain a very high view and at the same time only pretend to have a 'high' way of behaving. You may certainly keep a high view, but be very careful about how you conduct yourselves.

At the beginning of Dharma studies, traditionally the masters of the past would encourage students to form the resolve towards enlightenment, to engender *bodhichitta.* This is not merely a custom. Requesting and receiving teachings with this attitude of a bodhisattva will definitely cause our training to become true Dharma practice. Without bodhichitta, our practice may of course still be spiritual, but it will not be nearly as effective as it could be. Therefore, please motivate yourself with the proper enlightened attitude.

The attitude of bodhichitta encompasses both compassion and discriminating knowledge. It involves forming the determination to attain

supreme enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Just think: every single one of the infinite number of sentient beings, a multitude as infinite as the sky is vast, have all been our own mothers and fathers in past lives. Every single one of them wishes to be happy and avoid suffering. But in going through the different states of samsaric existence they suffer incredibly. They don't know how to avoid the causes of suffering; nor do they know how to produce the causes of happiness. In cultivating bodhichitta, we make up our minds to remove their suffering and establish them in a state of permanent happiness. At present, being ordinary sentient beings ourselves, we don't have the ability to eradicate the suffering of others. We are not able to give them protection or refuge, and we are unable to ensure their happiness. To remedy that, we should first study and reflect upon the sacred Dharma, then put it into practice, so that we will be able to bring immense benefit to all sentient beings.

Thus, compassion is the attitude of wanting to understand and practice the Dharma as a necessary prerequisite to establishing each and every being in the state of complete enlightenment. Discriminating knowledge, *prajña,* means to aim at accomplishing the lasting benefit of beings — their liberation from samsara and the attainment of the omniscient state of enlightenment. These states are not transitory, but permanent; thus they are of the highest value. In that kind of bodhichitta, both compassion and discriminating knowledge are combined.

This topic is very important, and I would like to expand upon it a little further. Ordinary beings in samsara have one single predominant thought: "What is best for me?" The attitude of wanting to help others is neither well-developed nor vast. We as individuals are not unique in being somewhat selfish. Virtually all sentient beings are equally self-seeking. We have wandered about in samsaric existence for such a long time that we have a deeply ingrained habit of treating ourselves as the most significant person in the world. We really aren't that concerned about the welfare of others. Paradoxically, however, considering ourselves paramount has not been that comforting. We haven't attained

infinite happiness with all our preferential self-treatment, have we? To complicate matters, not only are we not able to help ourselves and others — we actually slip into harming them. The habit of treasuring ourselves gives rise to all sorts of disturbing emotions. We feel attached, angry, dull, proud, jealous ... the list is endless. All these negative emotions disturb our state of mind. They are expressed in actions that hurt others and make it even more difficult for ourselves. It's all so unpleasant, isn't it!

The Buddha taught us how to deal with this selfish pattern. He explained that we should try our best to replace it with the attitude of bodhichitta. The frame of mind of a bodhisattva will also reduce disturbing emotions by reducing the selfish attitude. It won't immediately uproot egotism — that is difficult to do in the beginning. However, cultivating relative bodhichitta will reduce excessive self-indulgence and disturbing emotions. Using relative bodhichitta as a basis, the Buddha imparted a method to totally eliminate the very root of selfishness — namely, how to cultivate ultimate bodhichitta. Through practicing relative and ultimate bodhichitta, we are able to create the causes for bringing an end to suffering, and for benefiting both ourselves and others.

Whether we are receiving teachings or trying to apply them, we may have the feeling that we can gain personally from this — an attitude of "this is for my sake." This is an ingrown habit, reinforced since beginningless samsaric existence. It is necessary now to try to change that attitude. Of course these teachings will benefit us, but instead of being exclusively self-centered, think: "I will receive and put the teachings into practice for the benefit of all sentient beings." It's all right for that attitude to be a little artificial at present. Don't expect that it immediately will arise naturally. In the beginning we have to apply effort to change our normal habit into a broader, more altruistic frame of mind. So temporarily our compassionate attitude is artificial, a little contrived. But slowly, as we train and become more accustomed to thinking in a bodhisattva's way, this attitude becomes natural and spontaneous.

Every day we should try our best to form the resolve towards supreme enlightenment. Instead of continuing the tendency to think selfishly, endeavor to bring benefit to all beings. All the different practices start out with taking refuge and generating bodhichitta. There's a reason for this. Every time we apply a practice, we gradually shift our attitude. By doing this, we will eventually transform our nature into that of a bodhisattva.

Please understand that ultimate bodhichitta is not a temporary shift in attitude. It is not an artificial fabrication of a frame of mind, but a permanent change. Ultimate bodhichitta cuts disturbing emotions at their very root. We need to train in ultimate as well as relative bodhichitta. Ultimate bodhichitta is the very heart, the essence, of Buddhist practice. By beginning with relative bodhichitta, we are able to improve our minds and uplift our attitudes. Through ultimate bodhichitta we are able to thoroughly eliminate disturbing emotions.

Acting out of great kindness, the Buddha revealed to us the way things truly are. He encouraged us to question our concept of ourselves. We begin to get glimpses of this basic state when we look for that thing we call 'I' and discover that there is no such entity to find. 'I' does not have any reality to it; it does not possess any real existence.

We can come to this understanding through intellectual reasoning — we figure it out and become convinced. We can also reach this understanding through meditation practice. Whichever way we experience egolessness so that it becomes an actuality is fine. The bottom line is that we need to gain certainty about egolessness, then grow accustomed to that truth through our training.

It is not only the individual self that does not exist: *all* phenomena have no real existence. This is explained in the famous *Heart Sutra,* the *Heart of Transcendent Knowledge*, in particular the line: "No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind..." What this tells us is that no knowable things can be established to truly exist anywhere.

In the Vajrayana context, the emphasis is placed on personal experience rather than intellectual reasoning. We are taught to look directly

into our mind to see whether it is some concrete entity that can be taken hold of, that can be identified. We begin by listening to descriptions of how the nature of mind is. This gives us an idea through inference. Based on what we are told, we begin to comprehend that "This is *probably* how it is." We approach realization of the mind as devoid of any concrete self-nature. Then, when we personally look into our minds and recognize, we obtain direct experience. We finally *know* "This is how it really is!" Now we have a conviction about the true nature of mind.

The sequence of methods is thus first, to discover the absence of the individual self, egolessness; next, to ascertain that all things are emptiness; and finally, to be introduced to the natural state of mind. The great masters of India and Tibet applied these exact methods to reach realization.

Mistakes are inevitable when one begins Vajrayana practice. Here are two common ways of going wrong. The first one is called 'deluded meditation' — literally, 'the meditation of a fool.' This happens when we proceed without any clarity as to what we are supposed to train in. We may stubbornly and even diligently practice our own form of meditation, without knowing what needs to be transcended, and what experience and realization needs to be brought forth. We do it ignorantly, not knowing how, why or what; but simply persevering in our misconceptions of what practice is. Of course, such meditation practice won't produce any profound result.

Another mistake is to pursue only the intellectual understanding of what meditation is. We read through many texts and listen to many teachings, and at some point we decide that we now possess a very distinct picture of what meditation practice is. This mental picture can become very clear; we can be thoroughly convinced. We may even be able to easily talk about it and explain meditation to others! We are pretending to understand, but we lack any actual personal experience. This is the mistaken path of an intellectual, whose words about meditation practice are merely empty talk. Please try your best to avoid both

of these mistakes: either involvement in deluded meditation or involvement in platitudes.

How did great masters like Vairochana, Marpa, and Longchen Rabjam instruct others to avoid these two mistakes? They told their followers to begin by studying according to the Sutra tradition. They led them to understand the absence of the individual self and the emptiness of all phenomena. Their students gained certainty in these essential aspects of reality, and only then engaged in the Vajrayana practices of the development and completion stages. finally, the master imparted real guidance in the meditation trainings of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. This type of training allows us to avoid the two mistakes discussed above.

So, by studying and reflecting upon the Sutra teachings, we avoid falling into the trap of deluded meditation. And by undergoing genuine Vajrayana training, we avoid the trap of becoming a mere intellectual. These instructions, which have been personally practiced and taught by great masters through the centuries, are still available. The lineages and the realization for these teachings remain unbroken. At the present time there are masters who are learned as well as accomplished in the truth.

Now, some people may argue it's possible for us to figure the ultimate truth out for ourselves. We can read books and ponder the meaning; we can gain an intellectual understanding of how to practice. That may very well be true. But the profound nature of emptiness, the true natural state, is seldom the object of our thoughts. Indeed, it's not within the reach of ordinary thinking. For this reason it's extremely important to receive proper guidance and pith instructions in Mahamudra and Dzogchen from a living lineage master.

There are many other extraordinary teachings in Vajrayana, including the Six Doctrines of Naropa and the instructions on how to train in darkness and daylight. All these teachings can be received from the great masters of our times. A receptive student can meet with a quali-

fied master, achieve a correct understanding of practice, and gain certainty. Without this, we are bound to encounter difficulties in practice.

Teachings like Mahamudra, also known as the path of liberation, as explained by Naropa in this book, have the complete, true view. A beginner can embark on this training in a very gentle and relaxed way. It is not necessary to grapple with too many difficulties. For present day students, I feel it is a very good idea to first study, then understand and finally put into practice a teaching like this.

When beginning Dharma practice, some people experience tremendous interest and devotion, to such an extent that it becomes difficult for them to continue their normal work and life. Wanting to engage in intensive practice, we may neglect our careers; while pursuing our careers, our practice is neglected. This can become a very frustrating situation! A teaching like Mahamudra, however, is something that we can practice while working. The solution for the apparent dilemma is simple: 'work some, practice some.' Doing this, there is no real contradiction between daily life and Dharma practice.

A good example of this harmony between work and practice is provided by the lives of the Eighty-four Mahasiddhas of India. Look at tangkas of them and read their life stories. One was a weaver; another a farmer; Tilopa is depicted as grinding sesame seeds. Then of course there was Nagarjuna, who was an incredibly great scholar, and Indrabodhi, a powerful king. So you see it doesn't matter whether you have a significant or trivial job; whether you are an important person or a nobody in society. These masters exemplify the possibility of training and attaining accomplishment in Mahamudra in any walk of life. They show how it is possible to practice and work at the same time.

Mahamudra is incredibly beneficial for anybody's mind. It always has been, of course, but this is especially true in modern times. In the past, people seemed to have had more perseverance, like Milarepa, and applied themselves whole-heartedly to practice. Due to better circumstances, you could be a full-time practitioner and not worry about survival. Nowadays things are not like that. Practically speaking, we

cannot abandon everything and say "Now I only want to practice." It doesn't help if the teacher says "Now give up everything, forsake the world and focus one-pointedly on meditation." It is just not practical. We need to be responsible for our own living situation. On the other hand, it certainly doesn't help to think "Well, times have changed, I can't practice like they did in the old days." To attain accomplishment we have to practice and personally apply the teachings. Given the constraints of modern life, I feel that Mahamudra is a very convenient and suitable practice, one that is always applicable.

Mahamudra is the type of teaching we can keep in mind in our daily lives. Whenever we have a free moment we can think about the meaning of Naropa's words, paying attention to and bringing those profound teachings into our lives. Being mindful and attentive and applying the teachings whenever we have the opportunity will definitely be of great benefit.

The *View Concisely Put* and the *Summary of Mahamudra* are very succinct texts which explain the view, meditation, conduct and fruition of Mahamudra in simple terms. They don't cover much beyond that: we don't find details on how to sit, for example, or how to place our attention while meditating, because these are not necessary for the advanced practitioner. However, this is not so for a beginner. Someone new to Mahamudra cannot simply jump into the text abruptly. Therefore, first I will briefly discuss physical posture to be used when practicing Mahamudra.

When teaching Mahamudra, our basic state, usually called the nature of mind, is pointed out and is supposed to be recognized. The nature of mind, the nature of Mahamudra, may be recognized, or it may not. Sometimes the student is not so clear or confident about recognizing. Sometimes even though the student may have recognized the nature of mind, he or she is still overcome by disturbing emotions. Perhaps these disturbing emotions don't subside to the extent they should; or perhaps we still get carried away in one way or another. Whatever the particular problem may be, the qualities of wakefulness

don't seem to increase. Even though the vipashyana aspect, the insight, may be all right in itself, to support or to stabilize it we need shamatha. If our minds are stabilized by shamatha, our practice of Mahamudra will also be stable. In practicing shamatha, posture is very helpful in obtaining calmness and steadiness of mind.

The posture used here is called the 'seven-fold posture of Vairochana.' The literal meaning of the name Vairochana is 'manifest clarity.' By applying the seven points of posture, clarity is brought forth in one's experience. The first point is the cross-legged vajra position. Sitting in the full vajra posture for someone unaccustomed to it can be painful, however, and this can make meditation practice difficult. If this is the case, it's sufficient to sit in the ordinary cross-legged position. The instruction specifies one should sit, not stand up or lie down. The reason for sitting is if we stand up or lie down it's harder to be stable-minded. Our attention is more easily distracted, or we may fall asleep.

The second point is to keep a straight back. The backbone is the center of the body; so if it is kept straight, we can be sure the body is in alignment. Inside our body are subtle channels. When the body is straight, these channels are aligned and the energy currents circulate freely inside them. Our normal state of mind is influenced or literally supported by these energy currents. When the flow of energy is free and unhindered, our state of mind is at ease. We feel calm and stable which is good for practice.

Third, place your hands in the posture of equanimity or composure. Generally this means to put the right hand on top of the left and rest them both palm-side up in your lap. Another way to explain this is that you should arrange your hands in a balanced way — don't place one hand on the ground and the other on your lap. It is also acceptable to rest the hands palm up on the knees.

The fourth point is to hold the elbows straight. They should be neither rigid nor bent. Once again, we are maintaining balance with the arms. The fourth point is sometimes described as 'keeping your arms like a vulture.'

Point five is to bend your neck slightly. Do not let the head hang down, which squeezes the throat. The head should not lean backwards either, as this makes it difficult to be at ease. To bend the head or the neck slightly forward creates the support for keeping correct attention.

Sixth, lightly touch the tongue to the palate. This reduces the flow of saliva, which means we don't have to deal with thoughts about whether we should swallow or not.

The seventh point is to leave your gaze in mid-air, in the direction of your nose. Occasionally this is misunderstood. Some people think they have to stare into mid-air and try to see space in front of themselves. This is obviously very hard! They think, "I have to see something. How can one simply look at space? I usually only look at *things*, and fix my mind on them. This looking at nothing seems really difficult. What should I actually do?" Thinking like this is not necessary. We don't have to sit and look at something. To leave your gaze in mid-air in the direction of the nose simply means to not look at anything in particular. When our attention is not occupied with any visual object, our mind is more free to look into itself. Remember, the real goal here is for the attention to look into itself. We don't have to sit and stare into the space in front of us. Some people do this so rigidly that their eyes get irritated and water! That is not necessary. It's more important to *suspend* the focus; to not hold a focus on any visual object.✦

2



In past years I have taught other texts on Mahamudra: *Moonlight of Mahamudra* by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, *Pointing Directly at Dharmakaya* by the Ninth Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje, and *River Ganges of Mahamudra,* the *Gangama,* by Tilopa. This year's text is *The View, Concisely Put* by Naropa. It is a song about the view, which is a truly extraordinary teaching.

You may already be familiar with the life story of Naropa; but I will summarize it shortly. Naropa was born as the son of a king. Growing up, however, he had no inclination to become the ruler of a country. Instead he renounced his kingdom and took ordination as a monk. He studied and became extremely learned. Later, he stayed at the great monastic university of Nalanda in eastern India. It was the custom of that time to appoint panditas or great scholars to safeguard the Dharma at the four gates of the monastery in the four directions— north, south, east, and west — with an additional one in the center. After a certain master passed away, Naropa replaced him at the northern gate.

Naropa received blessings from Vajra Yogini, possibly due to some past karmic connection with her. The opening line in the song says, "Homage to the Vajra Dakini!" This refers to Vajra Yogini, about whom there is the following story. One day Naropa was sitting outside the temple reading a scripture. Suddenly a shadow fell upon the page.

He looked up and saw a very old woman standing before him. She asked him, "What you are reading? Tell me, is it the words you understand, or do you understand the meaning?"

Naropa answered, "It's the words I understand. I am learned in the words." When the old woman heard this she was overjoyed. She smiled and laughed; she danced around; she clapped her hands and sang. As she showed such great delight and carried on so jubilantly, Naropa wondered, "Why is she so happy to hear that I know the words? 'Knowing the words' simply means to be clear about the idea through intellectual reasoning." He then thought: "If that is the case, she will be even more happy when I say that I know the meaning."

So Naropa then told her, "I understand not only the words but also the meaning." Her reaction was exactly the opposite. She stopped smiling. She stopped dancing. She looked incredibly sad, and created quite a scene by crying and wailing. He of course wondered, "Why would she be really happy when I say, 'I understand the words,' but miserable when I say, 'I understand the meaning'?" Naropa asked her "Why are you acting like that?"

The old lady replied, "You say that you understand the words, and that is true. You are a learned pandita who guards the northern gate to Nalanda. But when you say that you understand the meaning, that is not true; you are lying. It made me very sad. You have not yet achieved the totality of experience and realization. That is why I appeared upset."

Naropa asked, "What can I do to understand the meaning? Who is learned in the meaning?" The old lady replied, "find my brother Tilopa. If you meet him, you will be able to understand the meaning as well." Merely hearing Tilopa's name, Naropa was overjoyed. From the core of his heart he experienced a strong conviction that "I must meet him!" He prayed fervently to be able to do so, and then began the sadhana of Hevajra. While he was practicing, a voice from the sky said, "In order to meet Tilopa, it is better if you practice the Chakrasamvara sadhana." So he did that, reciting the mantra of Chakrasamvara seven hundred

thousand times. After this he received another prediction that indicated he would be able to meet Tilopa if he journeyed to the east.

Naropa underwent twelve minor and twelve major trials in search of this master, but due to his pride he missed several opportunities to meet Tilopa. For instance, during his journey he encountered several deformed or disgusting beggars. Naropa behaved quite arrogantly towards them, and after he passed by they would say, "If you behave like that you will never meet Tilopa." The beggar would then instantly disappear, and Naropa would realize that they were emanations of Tilopa. Another time a beggar stood in the middle of the road blocking his way. Naropa asked him to please move so he could get by. He retorted, "I'm not moving. You can either walk around me or you can jump over me, whichever you please. But there is no way I'm going to move from this spot." Naropa proceeded to jump over him. The beggar said, "If you are that arrogant, you will never meet Tilopa." Once again, the man vanished into mid-air and Naropa was left behind feeling deep regret.

On another occasion Naropa heard that Tilopa would go begging for alms that day. He thought, "If I go to the nearest temple, where the beggars usually line up, I will probably meet Tilopa." When he arrived he asked if anyone knew the mahasiddha Tilopa. They answered, "We don't know the mahasiddha Tilopa who you are looking for, but there's one beggar by the name of Tilopa around here somewhere." When he first met this beggar, Naropa bowed respectfully to him, walked around him and requested teachings. Putting his hand inside his shirt, the beggar brought out a clump of lice, and said, "Throw these in the fire." Naropa thought, "I'm a monk! I'm a pure Buddhist! I can't do anything like that. It would be terrible if I were to kill sentient beings." Being attached to his self-image, he couldn't do what the beggar said. The beggar then snapped, "If you have that kind of attachment, you will never meet Tilopa." And again he vanished.

At the end of his twelve minor trials, Naropa was at the brink of complete despair. He thought, "I will never meet Tilopa. There is

nothing I can do. I just don't have the fortune, so I might as well kill myself." He took a knife and was about to cut his throat. Suddenly he heard a voice saying, "If you do that, it is of no benefit, even if you meet Tilopa." He looked around, and Tilopa was standing right there. At last they had met. Those were the twelve minor trials of Naropa. Later, I will explain the twelve major ones.

In Sanskrit: *Adhi Siddhi Sama Nama*
In Tibetan: *lta ba mdor bsdus pa zhes bya ba*
In English: *The View, Concisely Put*

The text I am about to explain opens with the Sanskrit title and follows with the corresponding title in Tibetan, which is *Tawa Dordüpa,* or *The View, Concisely Put.* In Mahamudra there are four aspects: view, meditation training, conduct and fruition. This teaching is about the view. While it is possible to explain the view in great detail, that is not the case here. This song is a condensed explanation of the view; hence, "concisely put."

Homage to the Vajra Dakini!

There is a direct connection between Mahamudra and Vajra Yogini, who is Naropa's personal deity or *yidam.* In the Sutra system this deity, as the female buddha Prajnaparamita, symbolizes the mother of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Prajnaparamita, transcendent knowledge, is the innate natural state. The realization of this gives birth to the fruition of the path of shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and the complete enlightenment of the buddhas. This realization, being the mother or source of all awakened ones, is depicted in the form of a female. Ordinarily the natural state is called *Chagya Chenpo*, Mahamudra, but sometimes it is called *Chagya Chenmo*, in which the 'mo' at the end is a female derivative. The connotation is that which gives birth, the mother or source of realization.

Paying homage is a gesture of respect and devotion. Out of sincere interest, appreciation and delight we are able to understand and realize

the nature of what it is we respect. Paying homage towards that which represents the state of Mahamudra with openness, pure respect, devotion and appreciation acts as a conduit to being able to experience and realize Mahamudra. That is the meaning of the line, "Homage to the Vajra Dakini!".

> To the omniscient lord of refuge,
> The protector of beings, I pay homage!

Next is an homage to the Buddha. There is a particular reason to pay homage to the Buddha at this point. In ancient India certain teachings predominated in different periods: first the shravaka teachings were eminent; then the Mahayana teachings became widespread; later the Vajrayana teachings prevailed. This has caused certain scholars to make conclusions concerning the importance of the different teachings. For instance, some declare that the shravaka teachings, now embodied in the Theravada tradition, are the authentic teachings of the Buddha. They don't consider Mahayana and Vajrayana to be the Buddha's teachings. Other scholars have determined that most shravaka teachings and Mahayana teachings are the authentic words of the Buddha, whereas the Vajrayana is not. In order to alleviate any doubt or hesitation people may have in studying a teaching like this, Naropa put in "Homage to the Buddha" at the very beginning. He wanted to show that the Mahamudra view is in complete harmony with the words of the Buddha.

The three main qualities of the Buddha are knowledge, compassion and capability. When paying homage to the Buddha the great master Naropa starts out, "To the omniscient..." 'Omniscient' here refers to the characteristic of perfect knowledge. This perfect knowledge sees the nature of all things as they are and perceives all that can possibly exist. In addition to perfect knowledge, kindness is needed. If the kindness that is directed towards helping other beings is missing, a person's wisdom doesn't help anybody else. Compassion is equally important. This is illustrated by the term "lord of refuge," meaning the

one who safeguards or acts for the welfare of others. In doing so he wants to protect, guard, or give refuge to all beings.

It's not enough merely to want to help others. One has to have the ability to do it as well. The third quality of an awakened one is the capability that is expressed in the words "the protector of beings." Those who possess these three qualities are the ones who truly protect and act for the welfare of all sentient beings.

> After pursuing statements and reasoning
> I have condensed and established the true meaning.

The next two lines contain the traditional declaration of intention to make this composition. 'Statements' refers to both the words of the Buddha and the teachings given by all noble beings. Naropa's understanding is in accordance with what enlightened beings have taught. He is indicating that his teaching is not something invented by himself. It is in full harmony with the words of the Buddha and with the statements of enlightened beings. Moreover, this is not simply an exercise in blind faith: Naropa thoroughly investigated the meaning of what was said, intelligently analyzing it and presenting it in a manner that is logical and reasonable. With regard to both statements and reasoning, Naropa is saying, "I have condensed and established the true meaning." He offers this in a clear, short, direct way.

Generally speaking, the system of Mahamudra points out the nature of mind itself. The disciple with sincere interest and devotion who is confident in the recognition will then practice it diligently. However, unless something is reasonable, it is hard to have true interest and appreciation regarding it. Making sense is dependent upon intelligent analysis. What we understand should be in accordance with the statements of the awakened ones — their teachings. So, "After pursuing statements and reasoning" also refers to the student.

In Mahamudra there are often four steps. The first is showing that the perceived — meaning what we experience — is mind. Next is the realization that mind is empty. Third is the understanding that this

emptiness is spontaneously present; and fourth, the knowledge that this spontaneous presence is self-liberated. This is called the 'four-fold pointing-out instruction.' The starting point is to show that what is experienced, what we perceive, is actually mind. This is contrary to our normal attitude that what we experience is outside and apart from ourselves. When what we experience is pleasant, we are attracted. If it is unpleasant, we are repulsed. We feel attachment and desire towards something that is attractive, and aversion and anger towards disgusting objects or people. Through this attachment and aversion we create negative karma.

To counteract this pattern, the Mahamudra teachings first introduce us to the fact that the perceived — that which seems to be outside and external to ourselves — is actually created by the perceiving mind. Perceptions are mentally created, like a dream. The inner, perceiving mind is empty. Understanding this naturally reduces the clinging and attraction. When clinging and attraction lessen, liking and disliking also weaken. When likes and dislikes decrease, joy and sorrow diminish. When joy and sorrow diminish, aversion and attachment naturally fall away. That is the purpose of the first instruction in Mahamudra.

All these apparent and existing phenomena
Are nowhere apart from mind, your own awareness.
Since it perceives and is cognizant,
It is like experience that is self-known.

Let's look at the first line. 'Apparent' refers to the objects of the five senses; all that is perceived. 'Existing' refers to the perceiving mind within, that which apprehends and perceives phenomena. 'All phenomena' means anything that can possibly exist. We should understand that whatever takes place, all phenomena, are not really outside us, but are actually inside our minds. In other words, nothing exists apart from our mind. There are four schools of Buddhist philosophy, the *Vaibhashika*, the *Sautrantika*, the *Chittamatra* or *Mind Only*, and the *Madhyamika or Middle Way*. This song sounds very much like the

Mind Only philosophy, which established that whatever is experienced is mind. The great master Dharmakirti presented a proof through which we can establish that all phenomena are actually mind. The proof is that no thing is separate from the mind which experiences it. It cannot be demonstrated or conceived that any possible thing exists apart from being experienced by a mind. All sights, all visible forms, are never separate from visual cognition, the seeing that takes place through our eyes. Audible sounds do not take place anywhere apart from sound cognition or hearing. Similarly, all memories and thought forms do not take place separate from mental cognition, the mind consciousness. The text here says, "Since it perceives and is cognizant..." That means that no phenomena is separate from that perception or cognizance.

Emotions and thoughts are what we feel and think. We experience them, and when we do it is none other than our mind that experiences. When we perceive something as being outside of ourselves, as an external object, it is actually we ourselves who have externalized the content of our experiences. Everything is in truth our own experience.

Experiencing is exactly what mind does, as pointed out by the line that says, "Since it perceives and is cognizant". The next line provides an example of this when it says, "It is like experience that is self-known." We know when we experience, because we possess the abilities of perception and cognizance. If what was experienced was not already mind, there could be no link between external things and mind. If what we encountered was separate from and outside the mind, it would be impossible to experience it. The inescapable conclusion is thus that whatever is perceived is mind.

> If this mind was not like that
> There would be no link and therefore no experience.
> This is how I have established the relative:
> "Understand that all phenomena are based on mind," as
> it is said.

External phenomena, inner phenomena, the perceiver and perceived — all are within the mind. Mahamudra practitioners don't spend too much time analyzing the emptiness of external phenomena. Rather, the practitioner is directly introduced to the natural state, the nature of his or her mind. That all things, whatever is experienced, is mind can be established either through reasoning or through meditation training. In this teaching I have presented the general intellectual idea, so that you can become convinced that it is reasonably so. Once you understand the point, you will have the trust necessary to begin training so that you can fully realize that this is so.

According to the Sutra system of Buddhism, to arrive at complete enlightenment we need to perfect the accumulation of merit for either three or seven incalculable eons. According to the extraordinary teachings of Vajrayana, it is possible to arrive at the unified level of a vajra holder in this same body and lifetime. Which is true? Both are! The difference lies in whether or not the practitioner is introduced to the very heart of the training, the natural state of mind. After being introduced to the natural state we can, by means of fully training in it, gain complete enlightenment in this very lifetime. If we do not engage in this training and instead focus on outer objects in a way that is meritorious or virtuous, enlightenment will take three incalculable eons. The determining factor is whether or not the nature of mind has been pointed out, and whether or not one has recognized it.

It's interesting to note that the accomplished great masters of Tibet had a slightly different approach to study and practice. When studying the Dharma, they would place more emphasis on examining the Sutra system of Madhyamika, Abhidharma, the Prajnaparamita and so forth. But when engaging in meditation training, however, they would focus on the vajra vehicle of Secret Mantra, Vajrayana.

Within Vajrayana itself there are many different ways of training, such as the development stage of visualizing deities and mandalas, reciting mantras and so forth. However, the key to attaining true and complete enlightenment in one lifetime lies in being introduced to,

recognizing and training in the natural state of mind. All the great siddhas attained accomplishment based on this.

Through Madhyamika we can establish how all phenomena are devoid of true existence, of any self-entity. It is a very convenient, very practical approach through which we can intellectually understand that all things are emptiness. When it comes to actually experiencing this emptiness for ourselves, however, the Madhyamika system seems to be a very roundabout method. Personal application involves looking into our own mind. The practice of the accomplished masters of India and Tibet was not to look outward by analyzing external phenomena, but rather to look into that which thinks — our own mind. In the moment of looking towards the thinker, you don't have to really establish emptiness or articulate any particular philosophical position. In the very moment of looking into that which thinks, it is seen as already empty, all by itself. The emptiness doesn't have to be proven in any way whatsoever. This very direct approach is the tradition of the siddhas, and it starts with looking into the nature of mind.

Now I have covered the first point: that everything you perceive, all appearances, are mind. Next I will discuss the second point: that mind is empty.✦

3



YOU ALWAYS HEAR THE BUDDHIST TEACHERS say that we should study the Dharma with a pure motivation. Being ordinary people, it does happen sometimes that we don't exactly have pure motivation. The definition of an ordinary person is someone who doesn't have pure motivation. Let's check ourselves every so often: "Exactly what is my motivation for studying these teachings?" If we find that our motivation is selfish, we should gradually try to change that into having a pure motivation. On the other hand if we already have a pure motivation, it may be that it is not so expansive, yet. It may be limited to only our group. We should try to our best to gradually enlarge it and make our unselfish motivation all-encompassing. That kind of training is very beneficial. Training now in having pure motivation, will help in the future. Then the true and authentic awakened attitude of bodhichitta will come quite naturally.

To continue the story of Naropa, the author of this text, I already covered the twelve minor trials he underwent while searching for Tilopa. After meeting Tilopa he underwent even more hardship. I will continue by telling how he received the ripening empowerments and the liberating instructions.

When bestowing the ripening empowerments, Tilopa showed Naropa twelve symbolic signs. Tilopa would show Naropa one gesture

or one sign at a time. After Naropa again begged him to teach more, he would show one more sign, but without any explanation. finally, having shown Naropa twelve different gestures of symbolic meaning, Tilopa sang a song in which he explained the meaning of these twelve signs.

The first sign Tilopa showed Naropa was a piece of cloth that he set on fire. After it burned and turned to ashes, the cloth looked exactly like the same as before, in that it still maintained its original shape. As Tilopa explained later in the song, our disturbing emotions are like the cloth, and the oral instruction of a qualified master is like the fire that burns the cloth. The training in the pith instructions sets our disturbing emotions on fire and burns them to cinders. What we finally end up with in our minds is something that resembles disturbing emotions, but which doesn't really have the fiber or texture of genuine disturbing emotions. Although we appear to be an ordinary human being, our nature, the continuum of buddha nature, is originally pure and clear, like a crystal ball.

For the next instruction Tilopa tied a knot in a piece of rope and told Naropa to untie it. Our attachment to the aims and entanglement within the struggles of this life are like a knot tied in a rope, which needs to be released. Next, Tilopa placed a jewel on the crown of Naropa's head. This means that although our stream of being is originally and utterly pure, we are fettered by temporary mistaken, impure perceptions that need to be released. In order to do so, we need to depend on a qualified master who is like a precious jewel to be revered at the crown of our head. In the next symbolic sign, Tilopa merely looked at the jewel very carefully for a long time. The implication here is that once you meet a qualified master, you should follow him very mindfully and attentively for a long time.

Then Tilopa took out a large basin and filled it with water. He ordered Naropa to drink all of it, which Naropa succeeded in doing. The meaning here is having connected with a qualified master, you need to absorb or assimilate all the pith instructions in their entirety. After Naropa begged repeatedly for the next instruction, Tilopa simply

showed a design known as the 'source of dharmas.' This showed that all phenomena have never come into being; they are *non-arising*.

When Naropa again supplicated Tilopa to instruct him, he showed him a circle. The meaning of that is once you realize that phenomena are empty, the nature of emptiness is the unchanging single sphere of dharmakaya. Then Tilopa pointed his finger towards his own heart, meaning that the single sphere of dharmakaya is not somewhere else; it is in oneself. Next, Tilopa tied a knot in a snake and placed it in front of Naropa. Without doing anything to the snake the knot was untied by itself. The meaning of this is that once we realize the natural state, samsara doesn't have to be unraveled — it is liberated by itself. When Naropa requested Tilopa to give the next instruction, Tilopa simply remained silent like a mute, not uttering a single word. This signified that the ultimate pith instruction is too profound to be expressed in words. It is inexpressible; we need to experience it ourselves. When requested again, Tilopa showed a piece of fruit, his way of symbolically indicating, "if you train in this instruction that I have given you, you will accomplish an excellent result." Lastly, Tilopa sang a song explaining the meaning of all twelve symbolic indications. He concluded by telling Naropa: "You have understood all these signs correctly. Your nature has been ripened, and you are now qualified to receive the pith instructions."

This was from the life story; now, back to the song. I have described how all phenomena, whatever is experienced, is mind. I will start on the next point; that this mind is empty.

> The very basis of phenomena, which is mind essence,
> Can be analyzed, dissected with reasoning, and so forth,
> But this naturally luminous mind
> And the momentary defilement of thought, these two,
> Whether or not they are one or different
> Is a topic of extreme profundity.

'Basis' means that the root or the basic nature of all phenomena is mind. When we scrutinize this mind, we discover that it is empty. In the general system of the Dharma there are two approaches to this end. One is to take inference as path: the student tries to deduce how the mind is by analyzing through reason. He asks, "Does the mind come from anywhere? Does mind remain anywhere? When it disappears, where does it disappear to?" Through such intellectual deduction, we can gain an understanding of how the mind is, and will eventually come to the conclusion that mind is empty. The 'but' which starts the third line means that although we can analyze and arrive at the conclusion that mind is empty, we can also use the approach of direct perception, and simply see in actuality that mind is empty.

The analytical approach proceeds step by step. first we scrutinize this thinking mind, how it is and what it looks like. We have a vague feeling that mind is something very strong, powerful, and solid. We determine it to be an entity that concretely exists, somewhere. We haven't looked for it, though, so we don't really know. Somehow it must be there. Later, we receive instructions on looking for our mind. We search for it and try to define what it looks like, but we fail to find a concrete thing that has a particular shape, color, or form. Did we fail because we didn't know how to look? Or is it because somehow we made a mistake, missed the point and weren't able to find this mind? Neither case applies. It is simply because mind is not a real "thing" that can be seen in any concrete or material way.

So, inference can be used to examine external things. Reasoning intellectually in this way, we conclude that all things are empty. However, when it comes to looking into our own mind to find out how it is, it is not necessary to deduce or infer. We can also see directly, in actuality, that our mind is empty. The third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, expressed this in a song, declaring, "You cannot say that mind exists, because even the buddhas do not see it." Mind is not a concrete thing that even a buddha can find as something to behold.

Mind is empty, but does this mean it is a complete nothing? No, it is not. Let's continue with the text. "But this naturally luminous mind and the momentary defilement of thought, these two..." What these lines mean is that mind is empty of any entity whatsoever. Yet although the essence is empty, at the same time it is not utterly non-existent. It is not comparable to a physical void or vacant space. Mind is not like the horns on the head of a rabbit— a traditional Tibetan example for something that doesn't exist at all. There is a luminous or cognizant capacity to mind which is naturally present. Even though mind is not a concrete entity, still there exists an unobstructed ability to cognize, to experience. That is why the third Karmapa continued, "It is also not non-existent, because it is the basis for samsara and nirvana." This cognizant quality of the empty mind is the very basis that makes possible the existence of samsara. It is also the basis for the possibility of attaining nirvana.

By this point, we may well comprehend that mind is empty of any tangible entity and yet is naturally cognizant. The next question that arises is: Why do we have thoughts? Some are good thoughts, loving and compassionate, full of devotion and sincere appreciation. We also have bad thoughts — attachment, anger, jealousy, pride, dullness and so forth. Whichever is the case, whether the thoughts or emotions we experience are positive or negative, they are all only momentary. They appear suddenly and vanish just as quickly because they have no substance, they don't last in any permanent way.

We hear that the nature of mind is *luminous*, *clear light*, meaning that it possesses the ability to cognize. We also hear that we obscure our own nature by involvement with thoughts — that we somehow fool ourselves or distract ourselves from our essential nature with momentary thoughts. Now, here is the next important question: Is this luminous nature the same as or different from the momentary defilement of thought involvement? If our nature is essentially empty and cognizant, and we are continuously fooled by our own thinking, how does this thinking equate with the natural luminosity?

You cannot claim that the thinking is a separate entity, because it is impossible for any thought to occur apart from the natural luminosity. On the other hand, you cannot say that this luminous nature is identical with the defilement of momentary thinking, because they are related to one another in a causal fashion. The innate luminosity becomes obscured by the defilement of momentary thinking. Hence the next line, "Whether or not they are one or different."

Because of this depth, scholars analyze.
Though they explain, I shall not write about it here.

This is an incredibly profound point. Everything stands or falls with this point: Do we know the very identity of momentary thoughts to be the empty and luminously cognizant mind, or not? That is what makes the entire difference. If we know that the nature of any momentary thought or emotion is empty cognizance, we are no longer fooled by it. Because this is so crucial, scholars investigate and analyze this in great detail, carefully elucidating upon it, quoting from scriptures, and using intelligent reasoning, proofs and counter-proofs. It doesn't seem that Naropa deemed it necessary to write about all these details, however. His main concern is for us to truly experience the nature of mind, not simply talk about it.

This mind that knows emptiness
Is itself the awakened mind, bodhichitta.

When mind knows this emptiness, its natural state, that itself is *bodhichitta*, awakened mind. Normally the word bodhichitta is explained as the resolve towards true and complete enlightenment: "I will attain enlightenment for all beings." That extraordinary and special frame of mind which is compassionate, loving and has tremendous fortitude is called conventional bodhichitta. There is also ultimate bodhichitta, which I briefly touched upon earlier. The *bodhi* in bodhichitta means enlightenment. The Tibetan equivalent, *jangchub*, refers to the state of an awakened one which is the perfection of both aban-

donment and realization. That kind of awakened state of mind in itself is ultimate bodhichitta. This is the meaning here.

The buddha potential is just this.
The sugata essence is just this.

It is important first to comprehend exactly how the natural state of mind is. After comprehension comes meditation, which means to train in experiencing the natural state of mind. By doing this, we will eventually fully realize it. We all have the potential for the realization of enlightenment, which is called 'buddha potential'.

People are of different types. Certain people, very pure types, are hardly obscured at all. Then there are those who are somewhat obscured by disturbing emotions, and those who are incredibly obscured. No matter which type we are, we all have the possibility for understanding and realizing buddhahood if we train in the nature of mind. Furthermore, our nature of mind doesn't differ in quality. The *Uttaratantra*[1] calls our nature of mind 'sugata essence' and 'buddha nature.' This buddha nature is the nature of every sentient being's mind. It is our original basic state that is empty of any entity whatsoever, yet at the same time is naturally cognizant. This empty cognizance has never and will never change. It doesn't increase or decrease in quality or size in any way. It is the unchanging, original basic nature of our minds.

Because of tasting what is,
It is also the great bliss.

This empty cognizance is something that we can 'taste' — that is, experience exactly as it is — in meditation practice or in *samadhi*. When tasting what is exactly *as* it is, this originally empty and naturally cognizant essence at that moment cannot be harmed or disturbed by any external enemy, be it an evil spirit, a disease, or any other kind of impairment. The buddha nature is invincible. It cannot be destroyed or

1. Thrangu Rinpoche gives a lengthy explanation of the *Uttaratantra* in his *Buddha Nature* (Rangjung Yeshe Publ.).

lost; indeed, nothing can destroy this innate empty cognizance. The knowledge of this essence is thus accompanied by a fearlessness that is totally free from the threat of suffering in any form whatsoever. This state of being free of all dread, free of all worry, free of all pain is therefore called 'great bliss.'

The understanding of Secret Mantra is just this.

'Secret Mantra' is a synonym for Vajrayana. There are many different skillful means for Vajrayana practices, in terms of visualizing the forms of deities and mandalas, training in controlling the channels, the energies and essences, and so forth. These skillful means are all utilized to realize the main point of Vajrayana, which is the view of Mahamudra. Therefore, "Understanding of Secret Mantra is just this."

Means and knowledge is just this.

In Vajrayana there are the two aspects of means and knowledge, *prajña* and *upaya.* Prajña, meaning insight and knowledge, is considered to be of primary importance. The means — here implying 'skillful means' — is what is used to bring about this knowledge. Sometimes it is said that practicing development stage and visualizing a male form emphasizes skillful means, while visualizing the deity in a female form puts more emphasis on the knowledge aspect. Other times the development stage is described as the aspect of skillful means, while the completion stage is equated with the knowledge aspect. There are many ways of describing means and knowledge in Vajrayana, but basically, what means and knowledge is all about is to realize the very basic, innate nature of mind. Therefore, "Means and knowledge is just this."

The vast and profound is just this.

'Profound' refers to the state of emptiness, the mind of all buddhas. 'Vast' refers to the extensive actions undertaken to benefit all sentient beings, called bodhisattva conduct. Sometimes the vast and the profound refer to the different types of Buddhist scriptures, the different

levels and so forth. Whatever the categories may be, the very essence, the very heart of these teachings that are profound and extensive is nothing other than the nature of mind. "The vast and the profound is just this."

> Samantabhadra with consort is just this.

According to the teachings of the Great Perfection, *Dzogpa Chenpo,* the originally awakened state is depicted as Samantabhadra in union with his consort Samantabhadri, emphasizing the knowledge aspect. Samantabhadra is known as the Primordially Awakened One who never fell into samsara and thus never had to be enlightened at some point afterwards. He is considered the original state of enlightenment itself. What is this buddha Samantabhadra in actuality? It is the nature of our own mind.

> This space and wisdom, perceiving while being empty,
> Is what is called 'knowing original enlightenment.'

This unity of basic space and wisdom, of emptiness and original wakefulness, is the knowledge of original enlightenment. In other words, the heart of the matter is to truly realize what originally is — the primordially awakened state. The nature of our minds and the nature of the fully enlightened buddhas' mind are both primordially empty and naturally cognizant. This nature is not a thing that we *make* enlightened by creating an empty or cognizant entity that didn't previously exist. If we don't practice, our nature will not lose being empty and cognizant. If we do practice it is not that we achieve an empty-cognizant state. The 'space and wisdom' described here is our basic nature, the original unity of empty cognizance, which has always existed and will continue to exist. What is necessary is to realize it, to know it — described here as 'knowing original enlightenment.'✦

4



WHETHER WE STUDY THE DHARMA or apply it in practice, all the *mahasiddhas* or accomplished masters and all the spiritual teachers of the past have taught that it is important to have correct motivation. Adopting pure motivation ensures that our Dharma practice will be pure. Conversely, if we have an impure, ego-oriented motivation when studying and practicing, it is impossible to reach perfection through practice. Sometimes it may seem difficult to really have pure motivation, but if we try our best, it is possible. This is a key instruction: we should try our best to transform our motivation into something really pure.

Now I will continue with the life story of Naropa. I have covered how Naropa was given the ripening empowerments through thirteen symbolic indications. After that, Tilopa imparted the liberating instructions, also known as the oral instructions in the path of liberation. Tilopa put Naropa through twelve major trials, giving one pith instruction at the end of each. The first instruction is called 'the universally wish-fulfilling jewel.'

At one point Tilopa remained in samadhi for an entire year. Although Naropa circumambulated him, prostrated, and made supplications, Tilopa did not say a single thing. At the end of the year, Tilopa opened his eyes and looked at Naropa. When Naropa asked for

the liberating instruction, Tilopa stood up and said, "If you want a liberating instruction, follow me." They went up onto the roof of the monastery of Odantapuri, and Tilopa said, "If a worthy disciple were here, he would jump." Naropa looked around and thought, "It seems like there is no one else except me to whom he could be talking!" Naropa then simply jumped off the roof. He landed quite painfully in the dirt, having broken many bones. Tilopa came by and said, "What's up? What are you doing?" Naropa replied, "Well, I'm lying in the dirt because my bones are broken. It's very difficult." Tilopa replied, "To cling to this body as being yourself is difficult. Actually, it is like a clay pot — it doesn't really matter that much if it breaks." Tilopa then touched him gently, and Naropa's pain disappeared.

This was the first of Naropa's twelve major trials, Tilopa then said, "Now I'll give you the pith instruction known as the universally wish-fulfilling jewel." This teaching is mainly about the various visualizations of the deity Chakrasamvara and his consort Vajra Yogini. Depending on the classification, there are either three or six forms of Chakrasamvara. In a condensed form, when one emphasizes skillful means, Chakrasamvara is practiced as a single form. When one emphasizes the knowledge aspect, he is visualized with his consort Vajra Yogini. In a more extensive way, there is the mandala of Chakrasamvara with sixty-two deities, and the mandala of Vajra Yogini with fifteen deities. There are also medium versions of these practices, in which Chakrasamvara has thirteen deities and Vajra Yogini has seven goddesses. Tilopa gave Naropa the instructions on how to practice all these different ways.

After that, Tilopa again remained for one year in the state of samadhi. After a year when he opened his eyes and looked at Naropa, Naropa again requested, "Please bestow the pith instructions." Tilopa got up and said, "If you want them, follow me." They came to a large plain where a huge fire was burning. Tilopa told him, "If you are my disciple, jump into that fire." Naropa immediately did as he was told. He got quite badly burned, of course, and suffered terribly. When

Tilopa asked him, "How are you doing?" Naropa answered, "This body of mine, the result of karmic ripening, didn't fare well from its encounter with the element of fire. That is why I'm suffering." Tilopa responded, "To cling to this transient body as being yourself is what's actually painful. It doesn't matter that much if it's burned a bit. Now I'll give you an instruction in what does matter." He then gave the instruction on equal taste: mingling pain with equal taste, mingling disturbing emotions with equal taste, and mingling pleasure with equal taste. In other words, whatever the content of one's experience is, it is possible to train in equal taste. Once again Tilopa touched Naropa gently and all his pain vanished.

After having given the teachings on equal taste, Tilopa went to stay in the jungle and remain in samadhi. He told Naropa, "Serve me. Go beg for alms and get us food." So Naropa did that every day, returning with food for Tilopa. Usually Tilopa didn't seem to appreciate the food at all; he just ate it. However, one day Tilopa expressed great pleasure when eating the rice; remarking how nice the taste was. Naropa thought, "Usually, he isn't so enthusiastic, but today I have the chance to please him. Maybe I should go ask for more." Tilopa said again, "Very good! This food has an excellent taste." So Naropa went off, carrying with him a pot of water. He requested more rice, but the benefactor refused to give any. Naropa waited until he thought the man wasn't looking, then dipped his bowl into the food, filled it and ran off. Unfortunately, somebody did see him doing this. Now, according to Indian custom, putting one's bowl into a central container of food contaminates everything. The benefactor and his companions got very upset and chased after Naropa, who took flight with them in hot pursuit. At one point he poured his vase of water all around him, and it transformed itself into a lake. His pursuers couldn't reach him because he was in an island in the center, so they all got into a boat in order to catch him. When they got close, Naropa took his sword in hand and waved it around in the air above his head, creating an iron dome-like shelter. The benefactor's people set a fire outside it. The dome became

so hot inside that Naropa eventually couldn't bear it and had to come out. The benefactor and his followers then beat him severely and tried to strangle him. Naropa again suffered miserably.

When he finally returned, Tilopa asked, "What happened?" Naropa told the story about how he was beaten and strangled, and moaned about how much pain he was in. Tilopa said, "In samsaric existence, it doesn't really matter if you get ruffled up a bit. What is really important is the *samaya*." This was the instruction in the wish-fulfilling jewel of samaya, looking into the mirror of one's mind. Tilopa then gave him the instruction on how to keep a pure link between master and disciple. After that he gently touched him once more, and Naropa's pain vanished.

A few days later, Tilopa told him, "If you want a pith instruction, follow me." They came to a steep cliff below which a river raged in great turmoil. Tilopa said, "I want to go to the other side. Please arrange yourself as a bridge so that I can walk on top of you and arrive at the other shore." Naropa did so. When Tilopa was halfway across, standing on the middle of Naropa's back, he stepped extra-hard. Naropa fell in the freezing water, which also happened to be full of leeches. Eventually Naropa crawled out of the river and dragged himself soaking wet back to Tilopa. Tilopa asked, "What happened?" Naropa answered, "It was so cold. I really suffered, and on top of that these horrible leeches sucked my blood." Tilopa said, "Actually, to get cold and be attacked by leeches is not such a big deal. What is important is an instruction called *tummo*." Tilopa then gave him the fourth pith instruction on how to practice tummo.

On another occasion, Tilopa said, "Bring me a piece of bamboo." Tilopa split it up into thin pieces and stuck them into Naropa's body. Naropa sat there in great pain. Tilopa asked him, "How are you doing?," and Naropa replied, "It really hurts." Tilopa responded, "I think you need a pith instruction in the illusory body," and he imparted it to Naropa.

Next, they went out onto a vast plain. In the distance they could just see a man carrying a big load. Tilopa said, "That man is going to hurt us! Go chase him away!" Naropa started to run after the man, but no matter how fast or how long he ran, he could never catch him. The man appeared to be even farther away. finally, he reached the point of complete exhaustion and collapsed on the ground. Tilopa came by and inquired, "How are you doing?" Naropa said, "I am so exhausted, I cannot possibly move." Tilopa told him, "You have been roaming about in samsara for so long that this little amount of exertion should be no big deal. Here, I'll give you an instruction in dream practice."

So you see the pattern: first Naropa would undergo a major trial; then Tilopa would give him an important pith instruction. Out of the twelve major trials, we have covered six so far. I'll tell you about the other six later. Right now I'd like to get back to discussing the song.

This self-knowing, while one is still defiled,
Does not depend on other things,
So self-existing wakefulness is just this.

I have already covered the topic on the innate emptiness of mind. I have more to say on this point, because it's really necessary to understand it thoroughly Although we possess buddha nature, we are not utterly pure and perfect like a buddha. We still have disturbing emotions, and are covered by karma and obscurations. Although we are veiled by these defilements, our empty essence remains unchanged, untainted by these obscurations. Because it is not dependent upon anything else, it is simply called self-existing wakefulness — *rangjung yeshe.*

Being aware, it is cognizance.

The nature of our mind is empty of any entity whatsoever. It is not a concrete thing. When we search for our mind, where is it? What is this mind? What does it look like? No matter how much we analyze, we never find an actual object that we can feel comfortable pointing at

and saying, "This thing is my mind." This is proof that the mind is empty, like space. But the emptiness of mind is not exactly the same as space, which is merely a physical emptiness. While space is a complete nothing, a void without wakefulness, empty mind is able to cognize while being empty. Clarity exists in the sense of being aware, being conscious. That is why Naropa said, "Being aware, it is cognizance."

> A natural knowing that is free of thought.
> This self-knowing cannot possibly form thoughts.

This empty essence is *rigpa*, knowing. This knowing quality has two options. It can face away from itself towards external objects, making thoughts that grasp in delusion. Here I am speaking of being aware in a deluded fashion, of being mistaken in the sense that there is no knowing what the nature of mind is. The other possibility is that this knowing quality looks towards itself and sees how the empty nature of mind actually is. This is a recognizing of the nature of mind itself. At this point there is no thought. You see in actuality. When there is this kind of direct seeing, it is not possible to form any concepts. Self-knowing is free of all thoughts.

So, our minds have two aspects: crude or coarse thinking, which is deluded; and the nature of mind. In thinking, the mind faces away from itself towards objects, which is mistaken. Yet, if while thinking of something, we look the opposite way into what thinks, we see there is no thinker of the thought at all. This is because the thinker is empty and inconcrete; not some *thing* that thinks. This is why Naropa said that the essence of mind is nonconceptual.

One of Milarepa's students, called Nyama Paltabum, once asked him, "I can train in natural mind, but what do I do when a thought arises?" Milarepa answered, "When you train in natural mind, you should see thoughts as the magical display of mind. Then work to further establish the natural state of mind." What Milarepa was saying was that thoughts are merely an expression of the mind, like waves moving on the surface of water. Realizing this, we should continue to

train further, and establish that the movements of thoughts are simply the magical display of mind. "When you more deeply explore the natural state of mind," Milarepa continued, "you will eventually realize that it is nonconceptual," meaning free of any thought whatsoever.

Without conceptualizing a 'mind,'
Since it is not something to be conceived,
This original wakefulness, cognizant yet thought-free,
Is like the wisdom of the Tathagata.

This empty nature of mind is also cognizant. It is cognizant yet thought-free. Empty mind is able to know whatever takes place. It is a fact that we do perceive; we do experience; we do cognize. This basic quality of being cognizant is not momentary; it is always there. Our sense of knowing, our original wakefulness is cognizant, yet thought-free. This basic quality of being awake does not fluctuate. It is not something that occurs all of a sudden. It is primordial.

However, all the various thought movements, along with emotions like anger or attachment, *are* momentary. It is important to distinguish between temporary thought movements and the primordial cognizance that is the nature of mind.

When Naropa writes, 'Like the wisdom of the Tathagata,' he refers to the way a buddha, a fully enlightened one, perceives. That kind of wisdom is original wakefulness, which sees the nature of all things as they are. It is ultimate truth, in actuality. At the same time wisdom perceives the superficial or relative reality of all existing things. One may wonder if a tathagatha's experience of perceiving relative truth is somehow mixed with thoughts and emotions of pleasure and pain, like and dislike. The answer is no, it isn't. A tathagata's way of perceiving is totally free of that.

Therefore, it is taught, "Realize that luminous mind
Is the mind of original wakefulness,
And don't seek an enlightenment separate from that."

'Luminous mind' means that the nature of mind itself is an awake brightness which is original wakefulness. Our basic nature is in itself the state of realization of all buddhas. To fully awaken to this natural state, it is not necessary to go to some other place to reach enlightenment. The state of enlightenment is not extrinsic to ourselves. Buddhahood is not something that will appear suddenly in the future. It is really nothing other than a matter of first recognizing, then fully training in and realizing in actuality, the nature of our own mind. That is why Naropa said, "Don't seek an enlightenment separate from that." The awakened state of enlightenment, the real buddha, is not something we should seek separate from the nature of our own mind.

Nevertheless, this mind does become disturbed
By the defilement of momentary thoughts.

Nevertheless, having not fully realized that this is so, we do get involved in thoughts of this and that, in the temporary movements of mind. We get attached; we become angry; we feel competitive. While involved in these disturbing emotions, we lose the realization that the nature of our mind is original empty cognizance. We are obscured by ignorance and disturbing emotions, and at that moment we cannot really claim to be a buddha. Although our real nature is empty cognizance, identical with that of the awakened ones, while we are involved in disturbing emotions, while we are ignorant, it doesn't help much to say that we are the buddha.

Like water, like gold, like the sky,
It may be either pure or impure.

This is a statement of profound truth: though our essence is utterly pure, we are at the same time temporarily obscured, temporarily defiled. There seems to be a contradiction here at first glance. It is very hard to grasp how something can simultaneously be both pure and defiled. The *Uttaratantra* describes this state with eight analogies, while. Naropa here uses the three examples of water, gold, and the sky. Water is in

itself always water. It is pure in being water; but it can appear to be muddy. When there is dirt in the water, at that moment it doesn't appear to be clean. The water itself is unchanged, whatever its condition. If you let muddy water settle, the water will again be seen in its original state. Another example is of gold. A nugget of gold in its natural state remains pure in terms of its basic characteristic of being gold. Even though it may be covered by dirt or other foreign elements and may not look like pure gold, in essence the gold is unchanged. It is the same way with the sky: The sky is inherently empty, yet it's possible for it to be covered by clouds. At other times when there are no clouds, a clear sky appears — yet the sky itself has not changed.

These analogies illustrate how something can be at once pure and impure. Water can be clear or muddy; gold can be pure or encrusted in dirt; and the sky can either be clear or covered by clouds. Likewise, although our original nature is unchanging and empty in itself, it can be either impure — when it's covered by thought involvement — or pure — when conceptual thinking is absent.

> But the naturally luminous mind
> Is free from even a hair-tip of concrete substance,
> Like the analogy of a sky flower.
>
> It does not exist as it seems to be,
> Therefore, it cannot be established to be nonexistent.
> Being mutually dependent,
> When one side is invalid, the other side also does not exist.

This naturally luminous mind, the basic condition or the nature of mind itself, does not possess any concrete existence whatsoever, not even as much as a hair tip. It is like the example of a flower made out of air. The existence of such a flower cannot be established. Likewise, we cannot say that the mind exists in a concrete way, because it is not made out of anything whatsoever. At the same time, we cannot estab-

lish that it is non-existent, because non-existence is dependent upon something being existent. We use the word non-existent to negate something that was already thought to exist. If the nature of mind cannot be established as existent to begin with, there is also nothing necessary to negate as being non-existent. Isn't it true, then, that the two concepts of existing and not existing are mutually dependent? One depends upon the other, just like 'this side' depends on 'that side.' Thus, we cannot say that mind neither exists nor does not exist.

Terms like 'this side' or 'that side' can only be used in relation to each other. If there wasn't another side to compare it to, 'this side' wouldn't make any sense. The two constructs are mutually dependent. If the first term doesn't exist, the validity of the second naturally collapses.

Mind is neither existent nor nonexistent,
Since each of these [constructs] is negated.
It is also not both,
Since existing and not existing are a contradiction.

You cannot say that the nature of mind both exists and does not exist at the same time, because that is a contradiction. You cannot have something that both is and is not. Since each of them is negated, individually, then having either one or the other, or both at the same time, or neither one or the other — all of these statements collapse under the weight of their own internal contradictions.✦

5



ONCE AGAIN I WOULD LIKE TO REPEAT the importance of forming the resolve towards complete and true enlightenment. Develop the bodhichitta attitude, and purify your motivation. This pure motivation ensures that we will progress in our intended direction and thereby progress in our practice.

I have been explaining parts of the life story of Naropa, because I believe that by knowing more about who Naropa was and what he did, you will have more faith when you study his teachings. When our minds are filled with the openness of devotion, we are better able to taste the meaning of his words, to really savor them. Devotion arises naturally when we understand the kind of person Naropa was, the master he followed, and the many hardship he gladly undertook in order to receive the pith instructions. Understanding the depth of Naropa's devotion to the teachings will naturally inspire our own.

I mentioned earlier that Naropa received teachings in two sets or two aspects: the path of ripening and the path of liberation. I also explained how he underwent twelve major trials in order to receive twelve teachings. I've already described six of these, the last being the instruction in *milam* or dream practice. Now we come to the seventh instruction, which was on luminosity, in Tibetan known as *ösel*.

Once again, Tilopa arose from his samadhi and told Naropa, "Follow me!" They went off, and after a while came across a marriage procession. The chieftain of the land was escorting his bride, who rode on top of an elephant. Casually Tilopa said, "If I had a worthy disciple, he would jump up on that elephant, grab hold of the bride and drag her across the ground." Naropa took that comment personally. He jumped up on the elephant, grabbed hold of the bride, dragged her down and pulled her across the ground. Immediately, of course, the minister's people jumped on him and gave him a severe thrashing, beating him almost to a pulp. Later, Tilopa asked him, "How are you doing?," and Naropa replied, "Well, I was beaten mercilessly by the chieftain's people. I feel awful." Tilopa said, "When this body which you perceive as being yourself gets a thrashing, it's not such a big deal. What you need is the instruction in luminosity" — in *ösel,* which he then gave to him.

The eighth instruction Naropa received was on *phowa,* the ejection of consciousness. Tilopa took Naropa for a walk once more, and they came to a place where the king, his queens, ministers and retinue were traveling. Tilopa rather off-handedly remarked, "You know, if I had a worthy disciple, he would leap up, seize that queen there and give her a good slap." Without hesitation Naropa did just that. And again he got beaten, not just severely, but this time almost to death. Later on, when Tilopa came and asked, "What happened to you?" Naropa replied, "Well, the king was like a bow and I was like an arrow that was shot here and there until finally my mind left my body." Tilopa said, "Leaving this illusory body behind is not such a big deal. What is necessary is to know how to eject consciousness." Naropa then received the teaching on *phowa,* the ejection of consciousness.

The next teaching, the ninth, concerns the transference of consciousness, *drong-jug* in Tibetan. Again, a dramatic story precedes the teaching. Tilopa once more took Naropa for a walk. This time they came upon a prince riding in a chariot. The prince was beautifully ornamented with an elaborate crown, rich jewelry and splendid clothing.

Tilopa remarked, "If I had a worthy disciple, he would leap up onto the chariot, snatch all the jewelry off the prince and kick him off." Naropa proceeded to do exactly that. All the prince's bodyguards tried to seize him, but this time Naropa fled. He managed to escape back to Tilopa, shouting said, "Protect me! Protect me!". When the soldiers arrived, Tilopa asked them, "What do you want?" They said, "We want this bandit who tried to steal the prince's jewelry and kick him off his chariot. Let us have that one!", they raged, pointing at Naropa. Tilopa said, "Well, if he did that it's his own fault; you can have him." They beat Naropa nearly to death. When Tilopa asked him "How are you doing?," Naropa groaned, "I'm almost dead." Tilopa responded, "To leave behind this body is not such a big deal. What you need is the teaching in transference of consciousness," which he then gave.

Now we will leave off with the biography and return to the song. Up until this point I have discussed how the nature of mind is empty in essence. It is not a void blank, however. The nature of mind, while unconstructed, is able to cognize and experience. This empty cognizance cannot be established as an existing thing. At the same time, it is not something that can be established as being nothing, totally non-existent. It's not both of these, and it's not neither of these. In other words, it totally defies any theory we may formulate about it.

It is not something material,
Nor is it apart from what is experienced as material.
Therefore, it is free from all constructs.
This is how I have established the ultimate:
"Mind is based on space," as it is said.

This unconstructed self-knowing
Perceives while empty, and while empty it perceives.

It is not necessary to establish the nature of mind as something that remains after suppressing all relative experience. Mind nature is not only relative experience, of course. That's why the text says "It is not

something material". However, it is not apart from what is experienced as material — and "therefore, it is free from all constructs," or devoid of all mental concepts.

"This is how I have established the ultimate," the real meaning. "'Mind is based on space.'" Space is empty by itself. In the same way that space is naturally empty, mind is naturally empty. This unconstructed self-knowing is both empty and cognizant. It is unconstructed in the sense that it cannot be conceptualized as being either existent or nonexistent, both or neither. Still, while remaining nothing whatsoever that can be established, it experiences whatever takes place.

Experience and emptiness are therefore indivisible,

You often hear the statement that appearances and emptiness are a unity — that perception and emptiness are indivisible. Usually we assume that the perceived is *not* empty, because we understand emptiness of experience to be no experience. Thinking that emptiness and experience are contradictory and mutually exclusive is a mistake. In reality, all the accomplished masters of the past have realized that experience and emptiness are an indivisible unity. That which experiences is definitely empty, yet at the same time, this very emptiness allows any experience to unfold. Thus, mind nature is empty while experiencing, and it experiences while being empty.

Like the analogy of the moon in water.

This indivisibility of experience and emptiness appears to be contradictory from an ordinary point of view. When we try to understand it through reason, it is still difficult to grasp exactly how experience and emptiness are indivisible. And when we try to bring this into our own experience in actuality, it is still difficult! That is why Naropa uses a comparison to illustrate this point — "Like the analogy of the moon in water." The moon can be reflected on the surface of water, can't it? While it looks like there is a moon in the water, the moon is not actually in the water. Nonetheless, while there never was and never will be

any moon in the water, we still see the moon right there on the surface. We see it — but it isn't really there. That is a very good analogy for how experience and emptiness are indivisible. When looking at external things, we do find that something appears, something is perceived; but while appearing, it does not really exist. In this way, perception and emptiness are indivisible.

That was about perceived objects. In meditation training, we should look towards the perceiving mind. If we look into that which perceives directly, and not as an act of reasoning, we can discover the unity of perception and emptiness in a very immediate and actual fashion. We don't have to infer that this is so: we can actually see that, by looking for the mind that perceives and failing to find any real thing that is the mind. Mind is empty of any identity whatsoever; yet we still experience whatever takes place. Experience is not blocked or suppressed. To sum up: while being empty, there is experience; while experiencing, mind is still empty.

In the tradition of the pith instructions, the lineage masters speak of present, naked, ordinary mind. This present ordinary mind is the very nature of superficial experience. Any common situation in which we think of something or experience something is known as relative truth. At that very moment, leave that which experiences uncontrived. Don't try to alter or correct its nature in any way whatsoever. Simply allow the natural state of experience to continue. That itself is the ultimate truth, the nature of mind. *When we don't do anything to our nature, the very essence of relative experience is the ultimate.* To reiterate: first, we become aware of the fact that our minds have a cognizant aspect, that we experience. By simply allowing this cognizant quality to be, without trying to modify it or improve upon it, it becomes obvious that this mind is not made out of anything — that it is empty. In addition, it becomes perfectly clear that being empty and being cognizant are an indivisible unity.

> This is how I have established nonduality:
> "Space is not based on anything," as it is said.

Space is by nature empty; mind too is by nature empty. This mind is self-knowing, unconstructed. It is not made out of anything: it does not exist as something, and neither does it not exist. It defies any possible idea we can have about it.

> This unconstructed self-knowing
> Is itself the very basis of samsara.

Every experience that takes place, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is only possible because of the cognizant quality of the nature of mind. If we are in one of the higher realms, experiencing the pleasure or happiness of being a god or a human being, our experience only takes place because of the cognizant nature of mind. Equally, if we find ourselves in the hell realms being tormented by unceasing suffering and pain, that also takes place because of the cognizant nature of mind. Thus, mind's natural cognizance is the very basis of samsara. The reason why samsaric experiences do take place is because this cognizant nature of mind is ignorant and deluded. This state of deluded experience is called 'samsara'.

> Nirvana as well is also just this.

Undeluded experience is called 'nirvana'. When leaving behind so-called samsara and attaining nirvana, mind does not go to some other location. The essential nature of mind remains totally unchanged. It's not like the mind travels to another land called nirvana.

> The Great Middle Way is also just this.

This nature of mind has been established as being natural emptiness by means of the great reasoning propagated by Nagarjuna, Shantideva, Chandrakirti and other great masters.

> That to be seen is also just this.
> That to train in is also just this.

When speaking of path, there are two aspects: the path of ordinary beings and the path of noble beings. The path of noble beings has three divisions: the path of seeing, the path of cultivation and the path of no more learning. In the first division, what is it exactly that is being seen? It is the innate nature of things, the innate truth. Seeing the innate truth is thus the starting point of the path of seeing. That is why Naropa states, "That to be seen is also just this." The path of cultivation involves growing more accustomed to seeing the innate nature of things. The practitioner trains again and again, cultivating his or her insights further and further. Thus, Naropa says "That to train in is also just this."

That to attain is also just this.
The valid truth is also just this.

So, the first thing we should do is to see the innate nature; next is to train in that. In other words, having seen what should be seen through the path of seeing and trained what should be trained in through the path of cultivation; the outcome of these actions is the attainment of fruition, which is called the path of no more learning. "That to attain is also just this," which is no other than the basic state of the mind itself. "The valid truth is also just this." When distinguishing between what is true and false, we see that there is something that is really true — the basic state, the basic nature. Therefore, the valid truth is also just this.

The renowned threefold tantras
Of basic cause, method, and result,
And what is known as ground, path, and fruition,
Are just different situations of this.

The vajra vehicles of Secret Mantra mention the three-fold tantras or *continuity* of cause, method and result. The tantra of cause is simply the buddha nature present as the essence of mind of an ordinary being. The tantra of method refers to the skillful means of the development and completion stages that belong to the path. The tantra of result is

the fruition; the outcome of having practiced the path and realized one's potential. While these three differ in name, in actuality, the very basis for practice — the cause tantra — is simply buddha nature, the basic nature of mind. The principle of development and completion is also nothing other than that; and what is realized as the result is this very nature itself.

It is exactly the same with ground, path and fruition: the difference between these is merely a variance in terminology. The terms cause, method, and result belong primarily to Vajrayana, while ground, path, and fruition could be used either in the sutra system or in the Vajrayana context. In the *Uttaratantra* there is a clear explanation of the meaning of ground, path and fruition in terms of these being impure, semi-pure and utterly pure. Impure refers to the starting point, the ground of being an ordinary sentient being. Semi-pure means one is already established on the path; and utterly pure refers to the time of fruition, when one has attained the ultimate result of buddhahood. All these "are just different situations of this." In different Dharma teachings, other words are used.

> The basic consciousness, the all-ground,
> All possible aggregates in samsara,
> Are known as the 'dependent,' and so forth.

One example is the basic consciousness, the all-ground. As long as a person is involved in samsaric existence, this basic state is known as 'the dependent'. The Mind Only school, the *Yogachara* philosophy, explains three characteristics or three natures, called 'the imagined,' 'the dependent' and 'the absolute.' In this context, the word 'dependent' refers to the dependent as being indivisible from the nature of mind itself.

So, up until now we have established that mind is empty. Next, Naropa will introduce that this emptiness of mind is spontaneously present. If you have any doubts or uncertainty at this point, feel free to clear them up now.

Student: I have a question about the expression 'luminous mind.' What does the word luminous mean? Is it a symbol for something you can't explain in words, or is it like visible light that we can see?

Rinpoche: The word *ösalwa,* often translated as luminous, is related to the word light in that it expresses some kind of brightness or clarity. However, the real meaning of this is not a light that is visible to the eye. Luminosity refers more to the capacity to know. This ability is present within us at any point in that we always can understand; we always have a readiness to perceive and cognize. So luminosity is the capacity to know. Hearing that mind is emptiness may lead us to believe that there is no mind. It sounds like we are a mindless piece of matter, which we are not. We are able to experience. Our natural cognizance is available at any moment. *That* is luminosity, which is not made out of anything whatsoever.

Student: Who experiences the taste of empty luminosity?

Rinpoche: This is something *you* should try to discover in your meditation training! (students laugh.) You should look into what is it actually that experiences. (Rinpoche laughs.)

Student: How beneficial is it when I sit in these teachings, since I don't understand much of this at all? I like it anyway, but my meditation practice is not very good, not very deep.

Rinpoche: It's very nice that you want to attend the seminar, because, as we repeat daily in the chanting, "devotion is the head of meditation, as is taught" Devotion can be equated with sincere interest. Being interested makes it possible to understand the teachings. Remember, though, the teachings are about *your own* mind, which is not something that is that far away from you (students laugh). If you can be a little more diligent in your meditation practice, I feel the point of this will slowly dawn upon you. In reality, what Naropa speaks about is not impossible to understand, nor to realize.

Same student (holding up the Tibetan text): But this is really crazy …

Translator: You are holding the text upside down (*students laugh*).

Same student: Sorry, I just feel a little bit sick about all these words about empty mind and luminosity. I feel like a Dharma junkie — I need these teachings, but I can't stand them. How can I deal with this? I comprehend what you're saying intellectually, but it doesn't reach my heart. Is it better for me to go practice than to sit in these teachings?

Rinpoche: I would like to give a direct and frank reply now (students laugh). What I'm going to say is true. You are a little proud. You hold the thought, "Listening to this teaching about emptiness again and again doesn't do much for me." Holding onto that thought is a form of pride. Try to reduce that pride, and replace that rigidity with interest. Think, "These words come from a great accomplished master. Maybe there is something I can learn from them." Then lend your ear and sincerely listen. I feel that you will be able to understand something then. (Rinpoche laughs).

Another student: Rinpoche, earlier you quoted Naropa as saying, "Self-knowing cannot possibly conceive itself." Does he mean it can't form concepts about itself, or that it doesn't have experience of itself?

Rinpoche: The term 'self-knowing' refers to the Tibetan *rang-rig*. This is a synonym for the nature of mind, which is naturally aware, cognizant by itself. "Cannot possibly conceive itself," means that while you can experience the nature of mind, what our nature is, you cannot conceive of it as an object of thought. The nature of mind is not something that can be conceived of or thought of. In logic there are two different ways of perceiving: conceptual and non-conceptual. You cannot make your own nature an object of conceptual thought. It can only be experienced while one is free of concepts.

Student: I think, Rinpoche, you are speaking to us through a microphone, and the microphone is being recorded by a tape recorder. Most of us arrived in Nepal by jet plane, and you have a car that takes you to Namo Buddha. These things actually provide some merit. They allow Dharma to be spread and more people to understand the Dharma. Nevertheless they are in our world because minds have gone *out* in thought as opposed to *in*, as in the teachings and meditation. I'm won-

dering how do we balance these two things in our lives.: How much time and effort should we devote to "progress," or thoughts which create objects that benefit spreading the Dharma, and how much should we spend on the actual practice itself?

Rinpoche: You may be familiar with the distinction between relative truth and ultimate truth. The Buddha gave teachings to enable sentient beings to reach permanent happiness and enlightenment. He told them that the true way to do so was to turn the attention towards the ultimate nature of mind and train in that. While doing so, while practicing to reach enlightenment, we still live within relative circumstances, don't we? It's important to remember that these circumstances are relative truth, not relative falsehood. There is some genuineness in them, although it is relative This was exemplified very nicely by the eighty mahasiddhas. As I mentioned before, they all had different occupations. A few herded cattle while training in Mahamudra. Tilopa pounded sesame seeds into oil while training in Mahamudra. Another ruled his country while training in Mahamudra; and another, Nagarjuna, composed precious treatises on the Dharma while training in Mahamudra. Isn't it quite wonderful that this kind of simultaneous activity is possible?

Student: You mentioned three natures: the imputed or imagined nature, the dependent nature, and the absolute nature. What is the difference between these?

Rinpoche: The Tibetan words for the dependent and the absolute are *shenwang* and *yongdrub. Shenwang* refers to the perceiving quality, and *yongdrub* to the empty quality. Any given thing has a perceived as well as an empty quality to it. Perceiving is dependent, in that it is not something that is stable in itself. Perceiving takes place in conjunction with various factors, whereas emptiness is independent. It could stand alone, so to say, and is therefore called absolute. These two aspects are not utterly separate, however. Let's take the example of the moon in water. When the moon is reflected on the surface of water, the fact that there is no real moon, or the emptiness of moon in that reflection, is

something that is absolute. That emptiness is unshakable. Nobody can change the ultimate fact that there is no real moon in the water. However, the appearance of the moon is dependent. Because of the conjunction of the moon in the sky and the surface of the water, the reflection has to appear. It has no choice. That is why it is called dependent.✦

6



I HAVE ALREADY DESCRIBED NINE of the twelve major trials Naropa underwent, and how Naropa received one very important, profound instruction at the end of each of these. In the tenth trial, Tilopa said to Naropa, "At this time, you must accept a consort, a dakini." Naropa did so, but the dakini he found was a very tough one who put him through a lot of pain and misery. After a few encounters with her, he met Tilopa, who asked, "How are you doing?" Naropa said, "I feel terrible — I am really suffering!" Tilopa told him: "Both samsara and nirvana do not really exist. What you need is the instruction in how to sustain the state of samadhi while engaging with a dakini." He imparted to Naropa the instructions known as the *great bliss of the lower gate.*

After this Tilopa said, "Well, you'd better become a monk, since having a consort didn't seem to help you very much. At the same time you should punish yourself for how you have been behaving. Since all your trouble is caused by your secret chakra, you should take a stone and give it a battering!" Naropa did that, and he of course suffered immensely. Tilopa came by and asked, "How are you doing?" Naropa said, "Well, I feel just terrible." Tilopa replied, "What you need is the instruction on equal taste." For the eleventh instruction, he gave him the instruction called *Nine Cycles of Equal Taste.* Sometimes we feel pleasure; sometimes we feel pain; sometimes joy; sometimes sorrow.

The instruction Naropa received was on equalizing the state of all these.

The last instruction, the twelfth, is the instruction in Mahamudra. Tilopa said to Naropa, "You should offer me your consort." Naropa did so. When Tilopa received Naropa's consort, he slapped her. He asked Naropa, "How do you feel now when I beat up your consort?" Naropa replied, "I feel fine. I had the great fortune to be able to offer my consort to my teacher, so I experience great bliss because of that." Within that state Tilopa instructed him in Mahamudra.

After this, Tilopa imparted some further vital instructions. In order to receive these significant instructions, Naropa offered his body, which was the greatest offering. The story is as follows: Tilopa said, "Come! Follow me." They went out onto a vast open plain and Tilopa said, "I'll give you the teaching, but first prepare the site; make a mandala offering." To make the area clean, Naropa had to sprinkle water to settle the dust. But there was no water available, and Naropa wondered what to do. Tilopa said to him, "Well, if you punch holes in your body, liquid will come out, and you can use that." So Naropa used his own blood to make the dust settle. When he was about to make the mandala offering there was nothing to give. Tilopa said, "Why don't you use your own fingers and limbs?" Naropa cut them off and offered them as a mandala offering. At this point Tilopa asked, "Are you well? Are you feeling all right?" Naropa said, "I feel great because I have the incredible fortune to make an offering of my flesh and blood." Tilopa said, "The conditioned aggregates of samsara are futile, insubstantial and painful. It is a very fortunate disciple who is able to perceive parting with these as being a cause of great joy. You are a fortunate person." Then he gave Naropa the teaching on *bardo*.

Now let's leave the biography and return to the *Song of Naropa: the View Concisely Put.* The first key point put across in this song was that all phenomena are mind — that whatever is perceived is mind. Next it was explained that this mind is empty. Now we will discuss how this emptiness is spontaneously present. Spontaneous presence in this con-

text refers to the fact that anything can arise in our mind; anything can be experienced. All possible experiences unfold, both pure and impure; the impure experiences of samsara and the pure experiences of nirvana. That this great potential is spontaneously present in empty mind is indeed marvelous and wondrous. Therefore, Naropa begins with *emaho*, an exclamation of wonder and amazement.

> Emaho!
> The creations of this mind essence, while one is still
> defiled,
> The six classes of beings, and so forth,
> Extending to the bounds of space,
> Are the magical machinery of suffering, which surpasses
> the grasp of thought.

When this spontaneously present empty mind is defiled, the impure experiences of samsara take place. When this mind is undefiled — not covered by coarse conceptual thinking or disturbing emotions — the pure experiences of nirvana unfold. At the time this mind essence is defiled, its creations take place as the six classes of sentient beings. Now, when we speak of the six classes of sentient beings we must mention misdeeds and obscurations. Misdeeds refer to negative karma created through either thought, word or deed. Obscurations refers to the habitual tendencies for disturbing emotions. The disturbing emotions that we are ready to feel at any point and inevitably become engaged in can be either coarse, subtle or latent. Disturbing emotions reoccur because of the ingrained habits created through our involvement with them. Although disturbing emotions may be subtle, because of these tendencies they can easily manifest on a more coarse level as well.

For instance, when we get irritated and angry we should apply some remedy against ill-will, rather than nurturing it. The remedy is based on seeing that anger is unwholesome and negative. Once we see that anger is a flaw and we apply a remedy to reduce it, it lessens. If we do

not apply an antidote against anger, it proliferates. It can become expressed in thoughts of wanting to kill or beat up others, of wanting to inflict injury. The fully manifested state of anger is what is called the hell realms, where one perceives everything as a battleground, a realm of murder and violence.

Likewise, if we use an antidote to reduce the disturbing emotion of stinginess or avarice, it diminishes. But if we allow greed to take over and run wild, we entertain thoughts like, "I don't have enough, my wealth and enjoyments are going to run out. What am I going to do! I'll be poor! I'll be hungry! It's so terrible!". When this mental pattern is allowed to fully manifest, that is what is called the preta realm, the world of the hungry ghost filled with incredibly agonizing hunger and thirst.

The different phenomena for each of the remaining realms of the six classes of beings arises similarly. Each occurs when the defilement of the different disturbing emotions is permitted to run wild without applying any antidote. We go further and further astray into the painful realms of samsara. Earlier I mentioned that the essence of mind, the natural state, is utterly pure. The problem comes from the fact that our minds are temporarily obscured. The fact the mind is utterly pure does not exclude the existence of suffering when it is obscured. Although the essence is pure, sentient beings covered by obscurations undergo innumerable painful experiences.

While we are enmeshed in this magical machinery of suffering, it is necessary to train in the sacred Dharma, particularly in the state of profound samadhi. Otherwise this momentary obscuration of samsaric states will never end. Even if we want to accomplish only our own welfare, we still need to clear up and purify these temporary defilements. Yet honestly, it is not enough to do practice simply for ourselves. Just as our nature of mind is originally pure and empty, so is the nature of mind of all other sentient beings. The essential purity of our natures doesn't help us much if we do not realize that. We will simply

continue in samsara, experiencing tremendous, inconceivable and overwhelming suffering.

These four lines describe how the spontaneously present quality of empty mind allows the impure experiences of samsara to unfold, out of the defiled thinking. It is also possible for the pure experiences to unfold out of the spontaneously present quality of empty mind when it is free from the defilement of thought. When looking into that which thinks, we discover that although a thought appears as some entity that exists by itself; it is not independent. It is like the movement of a wave on the surface of water. As the wave is not separate from the ocean, likewise the thought is not separate from the thinker. Milarepa stated, "Thoughts are the magical display of mind. Resolve this magical display. Resolve the nature of mind." What is necessary is to recognize the essence of thought, which is unconstructed self-knowing.

> This unconstructed self-knowing itself
> Which is free from the defilement of thought,
> Is the nondwelling nirvana.

In the *Dorje Chang Chenma* we recite daily at these teachings, there is one sentence that says, "The essence of thought is Dharmakaya, as is taught." Even though thought involvement is a defilement, the very *essence* of this thinking — indeed, of any thought — is not different from the nature of mind itself. Therefore, the essence of mind is Dharmakaya. Thoughts are not something that concretely exists. A thought does not have any substantial existence. When looking into the very essence of that which thinks, we meet the natural and unconstructed awareness. That, itself, is what is called nondwelling nirvana. In ordinary usage the word nirvana simply refers to escape from samsaric existence. In the context of Vajrayana, however, it is the basic state, the nature of mind.

> The Vajra Being is also just this.
> The Sixth Buddha is also just this.

The six families are also just this.
Manjushri Kumara is just this.
Vairochana is just this.

Here the nature of mind is expressed in the form of the buddha Vajrasattva, called 'Vajra Being,' the all-encompassing lord who pervades all other buddha families. He is also known as 'the Sixth Buddha,' Vajradhara, the dharmakaya buddha who is counted as sixth in addition to the five buddha families. In the next line, "The six families are also just this," means that the five Buddha families and Vajradhara are essentially nothing other than the nature of mind itself.

In the next sentence Naropa says, "Manjushri Kumara is just this." As I mentioned earlier, the awakened state has three main qualities: wisdom, compassion and capability. These three qualities are personified by the Lords of the Three Families. Thus, the natural form of wisdom knowledge is pictured as Manjushri. In his bodhisattva form, he is called Manjushri Kumara, which literally means 'youthful, gentle splendor.' In the development stage Manjushri is depicted as orange-golden in color, holding a sword in his right hand and a blue lotus flower with a scripture in the left hand. Essentially Manjushri represents nothing other than the nature of mind itself.

"Vairochana is also just this." The buddha Vairochana is the natural form of dharmadhatu wisdom, one of the five wisdoms. Wisdom, literally 'original wakefulness,' is often described in two aspects: one is called "the original wakefulness that cognizes the ultimate," and the other, "the original wakefulness that perceives the relative." There are other attributes to wisdom as well, such as the empty and perceiving qualities of original wakefulness. Buddha Vairochana embodies dharmadhatu wisdom — the original wakefulness that sees the ultimate state of the *dhatu*, the sphere of all *dharmas*, all phenomena, exactly as it is. This wisdom has been personified as Vairochana, the central figure of the mandala of the five Buddhas. Essentially he represents the unmistaken view, the nature of mind.

Dharmakaya, the great bliss,
And the state of unity are also just this.
This itself is the fourth empowerment.
Innate joy is also just this.
Natural purity is also just this.

Dharmakaya is the nature of mind. "Great bliss" in this context refers to sambhogakaya, that manifests out of the realized nature of mind. "And the state of unity is also just this" means that the unity of basic space and original wakefulness, the unity of experience and emptiness, is likewise nothing other than the nature of mind. Vajradhara, the six families, Manjushri, Vairochana and so forth, all refer more to the development stage; whereas dharmakaya and sambhogakaya, as great bliss, refer to the ultimate fruition.

Next, Naropa says, "This itself is the fourth empowerment." The four empowerments are usually called the four ripening empowerments. The first of these is the outer *abhisheka,* the vase empowerment. It is given for the purpose of realizing the natural purity of the aggregates and elements. Next is the inner secret empowerment that is given in order to realize the natural purity of the channels, energies and essences. The third, the innermost or wisdom-knowledge empowerment, allows one by means of samadhi to realize the example wisdom, the great bliss of emptiness. The fourth is the ultimate or most supreme empowerment, and is often given by means of a symbolic gesture or the display of a symbolic implement. For example, the vajra master may hold up a crystal, to indicate how the nature of mind actually is. Sometimes he will show a mirror, or allow a reflection to appear in the mirror. Because this fourth empowerment, often known as the word empowerment, directly introduces us to the nature of mind itself, it is called the most supreme.

The next sentence is, "Innate joy is also just this", referring to the coemergent joy experienced through *tummo* practice. When beginning to train in tummo, we sustain a sense of inner bliss. When stabilized

and intensified, this bliss has four degrees, the fourth of which is called innate joy. Innate refers to that which is unproduced. It is not some new thing that suddenly dawns, but is a discovering of the natural state of mind itself as innate joy. "Natural purity" means the utterly pure nature of mind "is also just this."

> All these and other different indicators
> Known from the sutras and the tantras,
> Are for the most part based on this;
> Simply combined with this in whichever way is suitable.

The first line refers to the different terminologies used in the sutras and tantras. Mainly these words used are based on the realization of the nature of mind. These names and terms may vary to suit different individuals' inclinations. The last line indicates that all these different teachings and phrases can be used to link the individual with the nature of mind in whichever way is most suitable. The important point is to realize the nature of mind.✦

7



THESE VAJRAYANA TEACHINGS being presented here are words spoken by great masters like Tilopa and Naropa, and are extraordinary and extremely profound. After studying the sacred teachings, we are able to put them into practice and to eventually attain fruition. Remember that in any of these steps, it is the bodhichitta resolve that enables us to perfect the path and reach the ultimate destination. Therefore, at whatever time, either studying or putting the teachings into practice, motivate yourself with the precious resolve towards true and complete enlightenment.

We have arrived at the point where Naropa has undergone the twelve minor and twelve major trials, and has received the pith instructions concerning the paths of ripening and liberation. Tilopa then tells him, "Just remaining like this will not be so beneficial. It is like a blind person who cannot see, a deaf person who cannot hear, an idiot who can't understand. Something more is necessary." Naropa thought, "What is it I need? Maybe I should embark on the action," meaning the courageous yogic disciplines. Tilopa responded, "Until you have untied the knot of ego-clinging, it won't help to 'enter the action'. What you need is the instruction in how to bring forth enhancement."

After Naropa received the instructions on bringing forth enhancement, he commenced those practices. One day, he and Tilopa went to

the Vikramashila monastery, where Naropa engaged in some Dharma discussions. Later he returned to Tilopa who looked quite displeased. Tilopa said, "That was not very useful. There was not much benefit in that." Naropa asked, "Well, then, what should I do? Should I go and practice in the charnel grounds? Should I become a Dharma teacher? What should I do?" Tilopa said, "I think the best results will come from relying on the blessings of a qualified master." "What do you mean?" Naropa implored Tilopa didn't say a word. He took out his *kapala*, or skull cup, and heaped it with all sorts of disgusting substances of different kinds inside. He assembling a whole pile of foul-smelling stuff, he commanded Naropa, "Eat this. You have to." Since Naropa didn't have any choice, he began to eat it. Much to his surprise, he discovered not only did it have a fantastic aroma, its taste was amazing.

After this experience, Naropa thought, "If one doesn't train in meditation, then one's emotions become the direct cause for furthering samsaric existence. If one does train in meditation, the emotions are naturally purified, and the fruition will become the benefit for both self and others." He didn't say anything, but Tilopa understood immediately and said, "Yes! It's exactly as what you just thought." After that they both took on the attire of mahasiddhas and began what is called *entering the action*, wandering about living off alms with no fixed aims.

Naropa would walk around begging, calling out, *"Benduria!,"* which means, "Whatever you give, I will eat and digest!" Some kids heard that and wanted to tease him. One of them gave him a knife, gesturing that he should eat it. Much to their surprise, Naropa swallowed the knife — tip first. The children were amazed and the word went around the country that Naropa was somebody truly amazing. finally the king of that area heard the talk, and wanted to check Naropa out for himself. Mounting his elephant he rode out in search of him.

The elephant arrived in great majesty right in front of Naropa. Quite dignified, Naropa held up his right hand in the menacing mudra, and the elephant simply dropped dead right there. The king was quite

distressed, because it was a very expensive elephant. The villagers of that area were also upset, because a dead elephant is quite difficult to get rid of, and once it starts to rot it becomes almost unbearable to live in the area. The king asked, "Who told me to come here to begin with?" The reply was "Your ministers." "Where did they hear it from?" finally the rumor was traced back to the children. The king said, "Well, the children will have to pay for a new elephant." Since it was a very rare and expensive type of animal, the children's parents were now also very upset. There was no way that they could afford to reimburse the king for his dead elephant. Everybody went on agonizing about this affair, until one old lady said, "You don't have to solve this by yourselves. Why don't you ask the siddha himself? Maybe he will help you." They beseeched Naropa and he agreed to lend a hand. first he practiced the transference of consciousness, transferring himself into the elephant and moving it away from the village. All the villagers were quite happy that they didn't have a rotting elephant right next to their homes. Next he summoned back the consciousness of the elephant and revived it so that it could be given back to the king, who was also happy. In this way they were all very pleased, and Naropa was invited to return to the king's palace. He accepted and stayed on as the object of everyone's veneration.

However, Naropa didn't quite behave as one should in a royal court. He acted like a siddha, meaning his behavior was both shocking and outrageous. The ministers, the queens, and the other members of the royal family all slowly became quite distressed. The other priests living at the court were especially infuriated. They supplicated the king, saying, "In the past, Your Majesty has been very wise, but now you are housing this crazy person. His behavior is a disgrace to the dignity of the royal court." The king didn't do anything, so the priests decided to kill Naropa themselves, in secret. They lured him out to a narrow gorge, where they confronted him, saying "The way you speak is obnoxious. Your behavior is offensive. Now you must die!" Then they tied him up with ropes and chains, cut him into pieces and cremated his

remains in a big fire until there was nothing left. Yet, the next morning they found Naropa sitting right there in samadhi in the middle of the fire.

Incredibly regretful, the priests all apologized. Naropa simply replied, "Don't worry about this at all. Actually it's all been just perfect. All the abuse you heaped upon me helped me to train in further patience. Cutting up my body helped to interrupt the stream of samsaric existence; and burning my body in the fire helped to burn away disturbing emotions."

Naropa then engaged in the 'child-like conduct,' the behavior that is like a child. He would go to the villages and live with the children. Sometimes he would cry with them. Sometimes he would laugh. Sometimes he would just play around. One time Tilopa happened by and said to him, "To engage in the action [meaning yogic discipline] without the permission of your guru or the dakini is not appropriate. You shouldn't do that." Naropa asked, "What should I do instead? Should I request more teachings?" Tilopa said, "To request teaching after teaching is like drinking water from the ocean — the more you drink, the more thirsty you get. You'll never end this craving." Naropa again asked, "What should I do? Should I just try to reflect on the teachings?" Tilopa answered, "The more you think about the teachings, the more you envelop yourself in the web of concepts." "Well, should I practice more meditation?," Naropa asked. Tilopa replied, "What is the use of meditation practice if you haven't left attachment behind?" At his wit's end, Naropa begged, "What should I do?"

In reply, Tilopa sang a song which said something like this: "All that you experience is dependent origination. Dependent origination is non-arising. It is emptiness. Until you realize the unity of dependent origination and emptiness, don't ever separate yourself from gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom. Non-attachment is most important. Attachment to even the tiniest thing is like a fly stuck on glue. Whatever you do, be totally free from attachment."

Tilopa then told Naropa, "You must go to Pullahari and reside there. In the future, you will have a disciple called Mati. Accept him as your student and dispel his darkness." In this way Tilopa predicted the coming of the Tibetan translator Marpa, one of whose names is *Lodrö,* the Tibetan for 'Mati'.

Now we return to the song. We have now reached the fourth of the song's four topics, which shows that this spontaneous presence is self-liberated. In the former chapters I have explained how mind is essentially empty, and how this empty mind facilitates the unfolding of all experience, both pure and impure. I have explained how defiled mind gives rise to impure experience, such as unceasing samsara and the different unbearable sufferings of the six classes of sentient beings. Undefiled mind gives rise to nirvana, buddhahood with all its qualities. This unfolding of pure experience happens automatically, in that it spontaneously manifests. When we have fully realized this spontaneous presence of the nature of mind, it is self-liberated. To express the wondrous quality of this, Naropa again starts with "Emaho!".

> Emaho!
> The creations of this undefiled mind essence,
> What comprises the kayas of form:
> The buddhafields of utter purity,
> The magically created mandalas, and so forth —
> All these creations of great wonder —
> Appear, extending to the bounds of space.

"This undefiled mind essence" means the mind essence that is, in itself, free of any stain. Defilement does not have to be deliberately cast away to recognize that the nature of mind is originally empty. In the very moment of recognizing the nature of mind, defilement is self-liberated; it simply vanishes. This is also called realizing the nature of dharmakaya.

The recognition of the empty essence, the ability to experience the nature of mind exactly as it is, is called *dharmadhatu wisdom.* It is

knowing the sphere of the innate nature of things. Through realizing the nature of mind to be empty in itself, we automatically arrive at the understanding that all phenomena are devoid of any self-nature whatsoever. This seeing the nature of both mind and phenomena exactly as it is is called dharmadhatu wisdom, one of the five wisdoms.

Is this state of dharmadhatu wisdom, the basic space of all things, an empty, blank voidness? No, it isn't. It is a basic space in which any form of experience can unfold unobstructedly. Whatever takes place, whatever is perceived, is seen as being indivisible from basic space itself. Therefore, no experience is conceptualized of as being 'good' and preferable, nor is anything seen as 'bad' and rejectable. Everything is seen as being of equal nature. This is what is called the *wisdom of equality*.

If both the ultimate and relative are experienced as being of equal nature, does this mean that everything is somehow mixed together and indistinguishable? No, it is not. Everything that is perceived arises clearly and exactly as it is, as unblurred and as distinct as an exact reflection in a mirror. This is what is called the *mirror-like wisdom*.

These first three aspects — dharmadhatu wisdom, the wisdom of equality and the mirror-like wisdom — are predominantly aspects of seeing the ultimate. This doesn't mean that a buddha who arrives at the sphere of the innate nature is totally blind to what takes place on the relative level. A further aspect of the clarity described by the mirror-like wisdom is to see every single thing unmixed and individually, exactly as it is. This is *discriminating wisdom*, or literally, the wakefulness that differentiates things individually.

There is one final aspect: an unobstructed activity that works for the benefit of beings in a manner that is always timely and perfectly appropriate. This perfect knowing of what needs to be carried out for the benefit of others is called the *all-accomplishing wisdom*. The awakened state of the buddhas is endowed with all five of these aspects of wisdom.

Looking further into this subject, can one benefit beings by simply knowing what they need? No, one can't. Activity must also manifest for the welfare of others. This activity takes form as the magical creations comprised of the kayas of form, the *rupakayas,* which for pure beings manifest as the *sambhogakayas* and for impure beings manifest as the *nirmanakayas.* These manifestations are what carry out the four activities [of pacifying, increasing, magnetizing, and subjugating].

Briefly described, the sambhogakayas are the buddhafields of utter purity and the magically created mandalas. All these manifest out of the awakened state of dharmakaya. These sambhogakaya realms of utter purity are traditionally described in terms of the five certainties. The *certainty of place* is a pure sambhogakaya buddhafield. The *certainty of retinue* covers the entourages of a buddha, which is made up of bodhisattvas at the level of the tenth bhumi. The *certainty of the teacher* expresses the extraordinary form of the sambhogakaya. The *certainty of teaching* means that these teachings are unlike those given by a nirmanakaya buddha in this world of impure beings. Normally, these contain teachings on both the expedient and the definitive meaning. But the retinues that receive teaching in the sambhogakaya realms are exclusively bodhisattvas on the ten bhumis who perceive the innate nature of suchness. The teachings given to them thus deal exclusively with the definitive meaning. finally, there is the *certainty of time.* In our world, a supreme nirmanakaya appears only occasionally, but in the sambhogakaya realm, there is a continuous expounding of the definitive meaning of the Dharma.

In addition to these sambhogakaya manifestations, there are many other wondrous magical creations of the awakened state. These include the supreme nirmanakaya, like Buddha Shakyamuni, who appeared in this world and turned the three consecutive wheels of the Dharma. They also encompass other types of nirmanakaya called incarnated and variegated nirmanakayas. All these marvelous creations manifest to the furthest reaches of space, connecting an infinite number of sentient beings with the Dharma, who become established within it and are led

to the state of liberation. Next, Naropa brings up what happens when we fail to realize the correct view. He explains what it is to be in error, and to have only a partial understanding of the correct view.

The non-Buddhist Tirthikas,
In their ignorance of mind itself,
Are submerged in an ocean of erroneous philosophy
Involving a self, a supreme godhead, and the like.

When we don't understand the correct view, we are deluded. 'View' here means knowing the actual, true nature of this empty, cognizant mind. When we are deluded, we give rise to all kinds of erroneous conceptions about what really is. For instance, Naropa mentions the non-Buddhist philosophers who he describes as being ignorant of mind itself. They are, he says, submerged in an ocean of erroneous philosophy of a self. They attach existence to a spirit or a self, to that which is conscious and aware. They believe it to be a concrete, real thing. They may posit that the individual identity is a material substance, or assert that there is a mind to be identified.

As another example, take the non-Buddhist philosophy called the *Samkhya*. Its followers do not understand that all experience is a magical creation of the empty cognizant mind. Instead, they assert that there is a supreme godhead characterized by five attributes. The godhead is the source or projector of the experiences of sentient beings. This system lacks any comprehension of the nature of samsaric existence and the possibility of transcending it. As Naropa says, its followers are adrift in an ocean of erroneous philosophy.

The schools of our like, such as the shravakas,
The pratyekabuddhas, and the followers of Mind Only,
Maintain the duality of perceiver and perceived,
And conceptualize nonduality as being the true.

Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, both Hinayana schools, maintain that both the perceiver (the perceiving mind) and the perceived — the

perceived objects — both have ultimate existence in some form. Followers of the Mind-Only school understand that both the perceiver and the perceived are insubstantial, yet they still hold onto the concept of the wisdom that is a non-dual state of knowing as a true, ultimate entity.

> Moreover, they get caught in the web of concepts
> Such as whether the perceived is real or false.

Here Naropa is further discussing the view of the Mind-Only school. There is some difference within this school with regard to the reality of objects, meaning the content of experience. Some hold that the perceived is real in that it is experienced. Another group asserts that whatever is perceived is utterly empty, and is thus false and unreal. After all, whether one regards the content of experience to be real or unreal, one may still fail to see that which experiences as being totally empty of a self-nature. The Mind-Only school apprehends the perceiving mind as having some substantial existence. It's this clinging to a concept of non-dual knowing which prevents Mind-Only followers from reaching the ultimate destination of the path. Due to this subtle conceptual attachment, they are unable to attain true and complete enlightenment within this very same body and life.✦

8



NOW I WILL FINISH THE LIFE STORY OF NAROPA. After he received Tilopa's prophecy regarding his future disciples, including the Tibetan translator Marpa Lotsawa, Naropa felt extremely fortunate. He had met a qualified master and received the authentic instructions. True realization had sprung forth within his stream of being. He had such confidence that even if he met with the thousand buddhas of this aeon, he felt there would be nothing he needed to ask or clear up. After this he was extremely delighted! He left Tilopa to go wander aimlessly, without any fixed abode. Two other disciples of Tilopa, Riripa and Kasoripa, went to pay their respects to Tilopa and Naropa. finding Naropa nowhere to be found, they asked Tilopa, "Where has Naropa gone?" Tilopa answered, "He has reached accomplishment in Mahamudra and has left for unknown places." These two disciples were themselves accomplished masters. They said to Tilopa, "The two of us are Dharma friends with Naropa. Naropa is like a second Buddha, totally unrivaled by anyone. If he disappears and does not vigorously work for the benefit of beings, the activity of the Buddha will be interrupted." Tilopa said, "Well, if that is so, you can call him back." So the pair set out to search for him, and after a long journey they finally found him sitting in meditation in an empty valley. They told him, "Tilopa told us to call you." Naropa said, "If Tilopa commands me to

do so, I will come," and he got up from his meditation and returned with them.

Meeting Tilopa again, Naropa was told, "Since you have realized the natural state of nonarising awareness, the time has come for you to shower the rain of the Dharma on fortunate disciples by bringing them to maturation." His friend Riripa added, "If you remain alone in solitude, you will look like a shravaka." And Kasoripa said, "The time has come for you to dispense the medicine of the sacred Dharma to beings who are afflicted by the illness of suffering."

Naropa prostrated to Tilopa and said, "I accept what the vajra master and my vajra brothers ask me to do. I will teach all sentient beings without any prejudice whatsoever." Naropa went and stayed at Pullahari, where he had a vision of Chakrasamvara. In it he received a prediction that he would soon meet with a destined and worthy disciple, who would come from Tibet to eastern India. Naropa sent out one of his disciples, called Getsül Sherab, to find this disciple and bring him back. And this is how Marpa met Naropa.

That concludes the life story of Naropa. Now let's return to Naropa's song. I have covered the fourth point, on how the spontaneously present quality is self-liberated. Unless we realize that, we are in delusion. Whether we follow a non-Buddhist philosophy or a Buddhist system, until we truly recognize the natural state as it is, we will still be caught in the web of concepts. If we understand the natural state of mind exactly as it is, both the meditation training and the conduct will be correct.

By not mistaking the view in this way,
You attain enlightenment through the meditation
training and conduct,
That are in harmony with the real,
Just like a well-trained race horse.

The first line means to not be like a non-Buddhist philosopher, or like the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas and the Mind Only followers.

A mistaken view prevents us from reaching the level of Vajradhara in one body and lifetime. It is necessary to ascertain the correct view, as explained previously.

In Buddhism there are two approaches to a correct view: one makes use of inference, while the other uses direct perception, or 'seeing in actuality.' The view of Mahamudra uses the second approach, the seeing in actuality. In the Sutra system, one arrives at a correct view by means of inference, using intelligent reasoning. This is also true of several Mahayana schools. For instance, the Middle-Way school called *Rangtong* establishes the emptiness of all things by exposing their lack of self-nature, first by intellectual comprehension and then by attaining complete certainty. Since things are in fact devoid of a self-nature, the Rangtong understanding is a correct view. The other Madhyamika school, the *Shentong* system, uses inference to establish certainty in how the natural state of all things is the nondual wisdom of emptiness and cognizance. This is also a correct view.

Despite their philosophical correctness, these Middle Way schools are not especially practical for training in Mahamudra because their views are intellectual assumptions, the products of inference. In the Sutra system before reaching true and complete enlightenment one must perfect the accumulations of merit and wisdom for an incredibly long time. The reason why it is a longer path is because the Sutra system takes inference as the path. Sooner or later, we must all proceed to 'seeing in actuality.'

Mahamudra training involves embracing direct perception. We do start out with scrutinizing the nature of mind, but not as a conceptual idea or an object of philosophical speculation. Rather, we look into the mind to see how it is in actuality, and we see that its nature is an original wakefulness in which emptiness and cognizance are indivisible. Because we are seeing directly rather than inferring, Mahamudra is superior. It is truly an unerring and extraordinary view. The meditation training which comes from applying this true and correct view will also

be profound and extraordinary, unlike meditation based on inferior views.

When a view is unmistaken, the training in that will be unmistaken as well. And our conduct, our acting upon that view, will be equally unmistaken. When we train in the correct view of Mahamudra, the disturbing emotions and other flaws present within our stream of being will automatically subside. In addition, the good qualities present, the intrinsic qualities of original wakefulness — like loving kindness and compassion — will spontaneously increase. All this is possible only when the training is unmistaken, and unmistaken training is possible only when the view is unmistaken. What is an unmistaken view? It is in harmony with the real, meaning with the natural state. When the view is correct, the training and behavior will also be correct or in harmony with the real.

By keeping a view, meditation training and conduct that is in harmony with the real, we will definitely arrive at enlightenment. Naropa shows us the necessity of applying the correct view with the analogy of a fully trained racehorse. A well-trained and well-bred horse will take an experienced rider to wherever he or she intends to go. There will not be any sidetracks or stumbles at any point on the way. The rider will safely and easily arrive at the desired destination. Arriving at enlightenment through a correct view, meditation and conduct is like riding a well-trained horse.

A great number of practitioners in the past attained accomplishment by training in this unmistaken view. Many of them departed from this life to celestial realms without leaving an ordinary corpse behind. There have been a great number of practitioners who left in the rainbow body. How is such mastery achieved? Again, true accomplishment is based on the unmistaken, correct view, which is exactly what Naropa presents in this song.

> Unless you are in harmony with the real view,
> Your meditation training and conduct will be mistaken
> And you will not attain fruition,

Like a blind man without a guide.

On the other hand, to practice a view that is not in harmony with what is real will result in mistaken training and behavior. The outcome will not be what we intended. Take the example of the non-Buddhist philosophers who impute the erroneous existence of an independent self or a supreme godhead. Practice based on this kind of assertion does not facilitate the realization of what is real — egolessness and emptiness. It is certainly possible to accumulate some merit based on the false ideas of self and a godhead. However, that merit only ripens as a rebirth with the pleasures of the higher realms within samsara. Realizing egolessness is the only actual remedy against disturbing emotions. Without realizing emptiness, we are unable to cut the root of disturbing emotions. Without cutting the root of disturbing emotions, true liberation is a "Mission: Impossible". So let me repeat again: if the view is not correct and true, our meditation training, conduct and fruition are also mistaken.

Among the Buddhist schools, the views of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are said to be partially correct or incomplete, in the sense that they do not fully see emptiness, nor realize the natural state to be empty cognizance. For instance, the shravaka view of emptiness is limited to an understanding of egolessness, the non-existence of the individual self. Lacking the complete view, the shravakas' meditation training is also incomplete, as is the conduct and fruition. By following the shravaka path, one can eliminate the obscuration of disturbing emotions, but the cognitive obscuration remains. The end result achieved by training in egolessness and emphasizing impermanence is called the shravaka arhat level.

The pratyekabuddhas, on the other hand, understand the non-existence of the self-entity of phenomena to some extent, in that they understand that perceived objects have no ultimate existence. Based on this view, they achieve the pratyekabuddha arhat level; but they are unable to attain the ultimate fruition of complete enlightenment.

Among the Mahayana schools, followers of the Mind-Only and the Middle Way realize the correct view, but this realization is also incomplete. Mind-Only followers comprehend that all experience is mind. However, they still hold that this mind truly exists. The Middle Way view, though correct, is arrived at based on an inferred idea of emptiness. And it is not possible to attain complete enlightenment in a single body and lifetime by training in an idea that is created through inference.

To reiterate, non-Buddhist philosophers with mistaken views are incapable of accomplishing fruition through their training because their view is not in harmony with what is real. The shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do attain liberation from samsara, but because their view is only partially true they cannot attain complete enlightenment. Followers of the Mahayana schools of Mind-Only and Middle Way can attain complete enlightenment because their view is basically correct, but because it is an inference, they cannot attain this state very quickly.

The crucial point that everything depends upon is whether or not the view is perfect and complete. No matter how much effort you might make by training in an incorrect view, a false assumption will never be in harmony with reality. The outcome of one's training cannot be anything other than what has been trained in. In other words, if the view is not truly and fully in accordance with the natural state of all things, the result of training in it will also be imperfect. The analogy used for the wrong view here is that of a blind person left alone on a vast plain. Unable to see clearly, he will inevitably take the wrong track and will not reach his desired destination.

How can my conceptual mind, [limited in its
    perceptions] like a frog in a well,
Discover the profundity by stirring up
The ocean-like depth of the true meaning!
May all learned masters forgive my errors!

Now we are nearing the end of the text. Here Naropa apologizes for any faults he might have made in writing this. 'The true meaning' mentioned here is the truth of what is real, the nature of all things. This is the state of Mahamudra, which is extremely vast and profound. The realization of that, the fruition, is equally vast and profound, like an ocean. Naropa humbly compares his intellect, his conceptual mind, with that of a frog living in a well. The frog, with its narrow perspective and confined horizon, knows the size of the well and the depth of its water. However, it is unable to fully fathom the depth and the vastness of the ocean.

When he writes 'Stirring up the ocean-like depth of true meaning' Naropa means that a narrow little mind like his own is incapable of measuring the true depth of Mahamudra, the nature of all things. Naropa apologizes for any faults that may have occurred in attempting to express it. He indicates here that his conceptual understanding of the nature of Mahamudra doesn't approach the true reality of how Mahamudra actually is. Even his actual, direct understanding of Mahamudra may not be complete. And even if he does possess a complete understanding of Mahamudra he acknowledges he may lack the clarity to express it fully. Thus he begs forgiveness from all learned masters for any shortcoming he may have committed.

These four lines sound like a simple apology by Naropa. Indirectly, though, they contain advice and instruction for us. We want to train in Mahamudra and are interested in receiving teachings on it. But we should be cautious because we are ordinary people with a weakness for becoming conceited at the slightest sign of progress. We enthusiastically congratulate ourselves at the tiniest attainment, and when we become even a little stable in our meditation state, we immediately feel, "Now I've really gotten somewhere! I've reached some accomplishment!" That kind of conceit automatically puts development on hold. It is just like pushing the pause button on a tape recorder. If we check closely, we can discover for ourselves how such pride hampers progress. Naropa teaches us by example that we should consider ourselves to be

like frogs in a well. There is no reason to be proud about minor progress in practice. Much better to understand that we have not yet completed the path and still have a long way to go. Use slight advances in practice to inspire you to work harder, cultivating the attitude "I must meditate! I must train further, because I have not reached complete enlightenment!" By doing this, we can advance further.

It is of course very beneficial to be interested in Mahamudra. It is an extremely great blessing to be able to receive the instructions and to practice. There are indeed extraordinary results and signs of the path, but experiencing small indications of progress doesn't mean that we should stop there and feel satisfied with ourselves. On the contrary, we should understand that they are just signs. Remind yourself, "The instructions are profound and effective, but I will persevere with fortitude until reaching complete and true enlightenment. Not only will I train in Mahamudra but also in devotion and compassion. The time has not arrived to stop the practice. I shouldn't feel proud." Heed the inner advice in these four lines.

> Through whatever goodness there is from writing this
> May the stain of delusion be fully cleared away
> In fortunate and worthy beings,
> And may the knowledge of realization grow forth!

In these last four lines, Naropa dedicates the merit generated by the writing of this song and makes aspirations. *The View, Concisely Put* is, exactly as the title implies, a concise expression of the view of Mahamudra. Merit is created not only by writing this but by studying it, by trying to understand and put this text into practice. Because this song has survived and has been handed down to the present day, teachings can be given and individuals can increase their understanding and progress in training. An inconceivable amount of beneficial activity can unfold, based on Naropa having written this song. He makes the wish that all that goodness be dedicated so that fortunate and worthy beings will be able to receive, understand and put these teachings into practice.

It is through the accumulation of vast merit that we come into contact with the words of the Victorious Ones. Most especially, among the expedient and the definitive meaning, only extremely fortunate people are able to connect with, receive and understand teachings on the definitive meaning such as *The View, Concisely Put*. In addition to receiving it, if we are practitioners who are willing to persevere and train with fortitude, we can truly be called worthy people.

Naropa continues to wish that the stain of delusion, which is the exact opposite of understanding the true view, may be cleared away. May the defilement of not being able to train correctly in meditation, and the shortcoming of not truly being able to enact the correct view, both be cleared away! Naropa makes the aspiration that, having cleansed the stain of delusion, the knowledge of realization may grow forth. How incredibly wonderful and auspicious to meet a teaching like this! Naropa adds to these blessings by sealing it with the aspiration that whoever connects with it will attain realization.

> This completes *The View, Concisely Put* by Naropa.
>
> In the presence of the pandita Jnana Siddhi, this was translated and corrected by the lotsawa Marpa Chökyi Lodrö.

The text ends with the remark that in the presence of the Pandita Jnana Siddhi, one of Naropa's names, this teaching was translated into Tibetan and then corrected by the Tibetan translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö.

To conclude, let me say that I am very pleased by your interest in this teaching. Having received it, please put it into practice by applying it in your meditation training. Be aware also that there could be some negative effect from the profundity of this song, in that the emphasis on the view may seem to preclude the importance of proper conduct in daily life. The view of Mahamudra is a high one, and there is always the danger that we may neglect the importance of appropriate behavior

and act in a crude way. That is not what is truly meant. Follow what Tilopa advised, in the quotation I mentioned earlier: "Until you fully realize the dependent origination of all experience, do not separate yourself from the chariot of the two accumulations." While training in a high view, please conduct yourself in accordance with the Dharma, gathering the accumulations and purifying the obscurations.

Let's dedicate whatever merit we accumulated from studying, teaching and practicing *The View, Concisely Put* to the purpose of all sentient beings fully comprehending the view of Mahamudra. May we realize the view of Mahamudra, perfect the training in it and attain true and complete enlightenment!✦

The Summary of Mahamudra



The Summary of Mahamudra



In the Indian language: *Mahamudra Padametha.*
In Tibetan: *phyag rgya chen po tshig bsdus pa,*
[*Chagya Chenpo Tsig Düpa*].
In English: *The Summary of Mahamudra.*

Homage to the state of great bliss!

first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of perception:

Concerning what is called Mahamudra:
All things are your own mind.
Seeing objects as external is a mistaken concept;
Like a dream, they are empty of concreteness.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of awareness:

This mind, as well, is a mere movement of attention
That has no self-nature, being merely like a gust of wind.
Empty of identity, like space,
All things, like space, are equal.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of union:

When speaking of 'Mahamudra,'
It is not an identity that can be shown.
Therefore the mind's suchness
Is itself the state of Mahamudra.

Thus he taught the Mahamudra of the view through the threefold perception, awareness and union. Next, among the three points on the Mahamudra of meditation, first stating the nature of the Mahamudra of the basic state:

It is neither something to be corrected nor transformed,
But when anyone sees and realizes its nature
All that appears and exists is Mahamudra,
The great and all-encompassing dharmakaya.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of realization:

Naturally and without contriving, allowed to simply be,
This unimagined dharmakaya,
Letting it be without seeking is the meditation training.
But to meditate while seeking is deluded mind.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of indivisibility:

Just as with space, just as with a magical display,
While neither cultivating nor not cultivating
How can you be separate or not separate!
This is a yogi's understanding.

Once more, for the three points about the Mahamudra of conduct, first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of self-liberation:

All the good deeds and harmful actions
Dissolve by simply knowing this nature.
The emotions are the great wisdom;
Like a jungle fire, they are the yogi's helpers.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of equal taste:

How can there be staying or going?
What meditation is there by fleeing to a hermitage?
Without understanding this, all possible means
Never bring more than temporary liberation.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of indivisibility:

When understanding this nature, what is there to bind
you?
While being undistracted from its continuity,
There is neither a composed nor an uncomposed state
To be cultivated or corrected with a remedy.

Once more, for the three points about the Mahamudra of fruition, first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of what appears and exists:

It is not made out of anything.
Experience self-liberated is dharmadhatu.
Thinking self-liberated is great wisdom.
Nondual equality is dharmakaya.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of samsara and nirvana:

Like the continuous flow of a great river,
Whatever you do is meaningful.
This is the eternal awakened state,
The great bliss, leaving no place for samsara.

Third, stating the nature of Mahamudra of ultimate perfection:

All things are empty of their own identities.
The concept fixed on emptiness has dissolved in itself.
Free of concept, holding nothing in mind;
Is in itself the path of all buddhas.

To conclude, instructing and stating the dedication:

For the most fortunate ones,
I have made these concise words of heartfelt advice.
Through this, may every single sentient being
Be established in Mahamudra.

This was given orally by the great pandita Naropa, to Marpa Chökyi Lodrö at Pullahari.

These thirteen verses that concisely show Mahamudra in completeness were divided up in accordance with their meaning. The details should be known from oral teachings. Do not fix your mind on other variations; since this is copied from the old manuscripts, I feel it should not be changed.

(This note was added by Shamar Kachö Wangpo. There is a saying that "The pith instructions in Mahamudra should be known from an instruction in concise words." It is the opinion of all past sublime masters who upheld the Practice Lineage that this teaching summarizes all the key points of Mahamudra instruction.)✦

9



THE NEXT TEXT BY NAROPA is called *The Summary of Mahamudra.* It is very short and thus not difficult to learn by heart. Nor is it difficult to practice, to understand and to apply. As a matter of fact, this is exactly how it was meant to be. Naropa wrote this with the thought of future generations in mind., offering it with the aspiration that they would understand, memorize and apply this teaching. This brief text is truly profound, for it contains all the key points of the view, meditation, conduct and fruition of Mahamudra.

To repeat a bit about the life of Naropa: before Naropa met Tilopa he was already a great pandita. Although he was incredibly learned, he was not satisfied with his intellectual knowledge. He set out to search for a master who could give him the profound pith instructions. Naropa suffered tremendous hardships in trying to find Tilopa, and even after he encountered Tilopa and was accepted as his disciple, he underwent unimaginable trials trying to receive instructions. finally he succeeded in obtaining the pith teachings from Tilopa. Among these extraordinary instructions were the teachings on Mahamudra, which he put into practice. He trained in them and attained complete realization of Mahamudra. Later on, he taught Mahamudra, often by using *The Summary of Mahamudra*.

Lord Buddha taught the Dharma in a way that was adapted to the mental capacity of his listeners. He taught beginners how to practice in a gradual fashion so that they could start at whatever level they happened to be at and progress step by step. When the Buddha turned the Wheel of the first set of teachings, he focused on the Four Noble Truths. The first Noble Truth is the truth of suffering, which we should all be able to easily understand. The second is that suffering has a cause, which is karmic actions and disturbing emotions. The third Noble Truth is that suffering can be brought to an end; and the fourth describes the way that leads to the cessation of suffering, called the path. In order to help beginners actually applying the teachings, the Lord Buddha began by introducing egolessness, the absence of the individual self.

It is a fact that ordinary sentient beings do suffer. They have problems and troubles, hardships and grief. Most of this suffering takes place in the realm of thought. The most difficult and troublesome thoughts are disturbing emotions. One of the main disturbing emotions is anger, or a hostile frame of mind. Out of this anger, we may use harsh words or act out physically, throwing or breaking something or hitting someone. Sometimes our negative actions are motivated by attachment or greed. Other times they come from ignorance, indecision, or being unclear, stupid or deluded. Sometimes we feel conceited or proud, sometimes jealous or competitive. So, do you understand the sequence of events? first, disturbing emotions occupy our minds, making us unsettled. Next, we express them through words, complicating matters. The worst situation is when we physically act out these unhealthy thought patterns. Disturbing emotions create a tremendous amount of problems, for ourselves and others. All of these disturbing emotions are based on ego-clinging — the feeling "Me, I am the most important." Once we understand this point clearly, we may decide to consciously do the opposite, saying to ourselves: "I will no longer consider myself important." Unfortunately, this doesn't solve the problem. Merely thinking "I shouldn't behave like that" is not in itself a direct

remedy against ego-clinging. A thought cannot eliminate the concept of self.

Previously I mentioned relative bodhichitta as a way to reduce disturbing emotions. By shifting our attitude away from selfishness and aspiring to help others. disturbing emotions can be reduced. This type of training diminishes their strength, but it doesn't totally uproot them. That is why that type of bodhichitta is called 'relative' or superficial. It only decreases disturbing emotions, but does not bring them to an end.

Ultimate bodhichitta, on the other hand, brings disturbing emotions to a permanent end. If we are introduced to and become certain about the nature of our mind, we can fully understand that there is no such thing as a self. Without carefully investigating, however, we tend to believe in the existence of a self. We're not very clear on exactly what constitutes 'myself,' assigning that term to all sorts of different things — our body, our consciousness, or some unclear mixture of these factors. We must practice to the point that we become clear on the fact that whatever the word 'me' refers to, this object is not to be found anywhere at all. first we must learn to look for this 'me.' Next, we need to become completely certain that there is no such thing as an I or a self. At that point, the very basis for disturbing emotions and selfishness is totally eliminated from the very root.

This is why the Buddha taught in his very first set of teachings how we can cultivate insight into egolessness. In the second set of teachings, the Buddha went even further. He taught that it is not only the individual self that is non-existent. Everything, all phenomena, all objects, as well as consciousness itself, is devoid of any true identity. All things have the nature of emptiness. Discovering this for ourselves changes our perspective. When we fully actualize emptiness, we are no longer obstructed by anything. Our minds are able to remain at great peace, at total ease. This is a wider or more expansive insight than that of simply realizing egolessness.

The understanding that all things are emptiness is entirely correct. However, we might misconstrue the meaning of emptiness to mean

nothingness, a complete voidness. This misunderstanding fixates on the thought that all things are a blank, nothing whatsoever, which is not correct. To remedy this, the Buddha taught that not only is the identity of all things utterly empty; it is emptiness itself. This emptiness, by nature, has the capacity to know, to experience, to cognize. That is the wakeful wisdom quality which is indivisible from emptiness itself. This is the intent of the third set of teachings, the final turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

The great master Naropa expresses the view of Mahamudra under three headings. The first is called stating the nature of the Mahamudra of perception. The second is stating the nature of the Mahamudra of awareness. The third is stating the nature of the Mahamudra of union.

first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of perception:

Concerning what is called Mahamudra:
All things are your own mind.
Seeing objects as external is a mistaken concept;
Like a dream, they are empty of concreteness.

What does it mean when we use the word Mahamudra? What is it that we are talking about? What does this term refer to? What is Mahamudra about? This verse introduces the nature of the Mahamudra of perception. Actually, what is it that we as sentient beings perceive? I discussed this topic briefly when explaining the first song, and will now go into it in more detail. Through what is called the eye consciousness, we perceive visual objects and see sights. Because we have the capacity to hear through our ears, the ear consciousness, we hear sounds. We have the capacity to taste with our tongues, which is called the tongue consciousness. Through our nose consciousness we can experience smell, and through our body consciousness we can touch. In general Buddhist terminology these are labeled the five sense consciousnesses, or the five sense cognitions. The mind experiences the world through these five senses. However, our mind consciousness itself does not experience sights, smells, sounds, tastes or textures

directly. What is being perceived is a mental impression of these experiences. Based on that mental image, we create secondary thoughts about past, present, and future. We determine what we like and don't like, what should be accepted or rejected. That activity is named the sixth consciousness. Sometimes it is called the ideational consciousness; other times simply mind consciousness. Thus there are six consciousnesses altogether.

The term "all things" refers not only to mental objects but to the objects of all six consciousnesses — sights, sounds, smell, taste, and textures, as well as mental objects. What is normally being experienced is an impression or an image that takes place in the mind. Not knowing this, we tend to believe, for example, that when the object of the eye consciousness is presented to the mind, that this perceived object is somewhere outside. It is apprehended as being outside of ourselves; and the perceiver, the mind, is considered to be somewhere inside. Likewise, whatever quality we attach to these perceived objects as being either pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, is similarly apprehended as a 'real' entity that exists outside of ourselves.

This is how it seems to be, in that this is how we normally perceive. But is this the real state of things? No, it isn't, because it only seems like what we see is outside. Actually, what we experience is an impression that arises in or exists in our own mind. Whether it's something that is seen, heard, smelled, tasted or felt physically, all these impressions or perceptions take place within our mind. All perceptions, be they the objects of the six consciousnesses or all the different thoughts and emotional reactions that might arise, — are not external to ourselves; they are mental occurrences that take place in our own mind. Therefore, all things are your own mind. Believing objects to be external is a mistaken concept. To believe that what is being experienced is other than our own perception, some object that exists by itself, apart from and separate from our experience of it, is a deluded idea.

The great masters give all sorts of different teachings to help us understand how things actually are. They may ask us to use our own intelligence to figure out whether the normal way of experiencing is true or not. For example, look at a pillar in a room. The pillar appears to us through our seeing, our visual cognition, and in our minds the image of the pillar is perceived. Based on that we form the thought "There is a pillar in the room." The real proof of whether this is or isn't true is our own experience. The great Buddhist logicians Chandrakirti and Dignaga explained that we use our personal impressions as the final authentication of reality. They state that the sole evidence beings have that things are perceived as being outside is because we say "I see them; therefore they exist." There is no other way to validate a perception. That is called the proof of clearly knowing. Based on this reasoning, there is no reason to believe that things exist outside our own experience, or are separate from their being known.

Mahamudra is the catalyst that changes our normal comprehension. The starting point in the tradition is proof through experience. The belief that things are outside of ourselves is nothing other than a mental perception. When examined, it becomes apparent that this mere presence has no reality to it. It is likewise with the perceiving mind, in that it does not possess any concrete existence. When mind is pointed out and recognized, it is possible to realize that both perceptions and the perceiver are nonexistent.

We can discover this through intellectual reasoning or through direct experience. The end result is the same. The Buddha and many great masters used the analogy of a dream to facilitate the understanding of the essential unreality of all things. Whatever we perceive during the daytime, we also can experience at night in dreams. We can see and vividly experience mountains, houses, people and all sorts of different things. Do they really exist because we see them in our dreams? Are there actually mountains and houses while we dream? No, it only seems like there are. While they don't really exist, still, for the dreamer it feels as if they do. That is why it is said that all things are

like a dream — because, just as in a dream, all impressions of external objects in our waking experience appear only in the mind. Therefore, they're empty of concreteness. This point covered the nature of the Mahamudra of perception.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of awareness:

This mind, as well, is a mere movement of attention
That has no self-nature, being merely like a gust of
wind.
Empty of identity, like space,
All things, like space, are equal.

The first verse was about what is perceived. The second verse is called stating the nature of the Mahamudra of awareness. In this context, you can simply call awareness the mind, the perceiver. When talking about mind, we get the impression that there is a doer, the instigator or someone in charge. We feel that mind is very forceful, very powerful. We need to look at exactly what this mind is. We must ask: "What is it that thinks; where are the thoughts?" At that moment it is very hard to pinpoint anything. However, simultaneously, there is a presence of thought that is similar to a reflection in a mirror. Look into a mirror very closely. find exactly where the reflection is; where it comes from; where it goes to afterwards. If you turn the mirror around and the reflection disappears, you are at a complete loss to find a fixed place to assign the reflection to. It is the same with the images we experience in a dream. first we dream of one thing, then another. During the second dream, where exactly did those first images go? It is invariably impossible to find a place that they went to, because there is no such place. In the same way, what we call mind, the knower, is only a seeming presence. There's no reality to it. It's a mere movement of attention: the attention moves as a thought, as a feeling, as a memory, but there is no substance to it.

Let's investigate anger. When we are extremely angry, it feels like the anger has a power of its own. It overtakes us so that we lose control.

We can't handle it; instead, it seems to handle us. It is so strong that we have to shout nasty words and contort our faces with rage. This is how it seems to be at that moment while our attention is directed outward towards the target of our anger. Instead of doing that, why not let our attention face itself, and turn inward. Look at what the anger is. Who feels angry? Where does this anger rise from? Is there a place where this anger is now? Is there someone who is angry, since we feel so strongly "I am angry"? Is there a real substance, a force? Questioning in this way, it's absolutely impossible to find such a thing. There is neither a place to find, nor a substance, nor any entity. It's simply a seeming presence, a mere movement of the attention which has no reality to it whatsoever. It is like a bubble on the surface of water. Anger arises from the empty essence; and thus it is nonexistent. We believe the anger is real. When we look into its essence we find that it is not.

Sometimes our aversion towards a thing or a person manifests as anger. Other times it's not as strong, but lingers as a more subtle form of aggression. We keep our hostility in mind and hold a grudge. We don't want to let go of the negativity. It is just ready to be provoked There's another shade of anger called ill-will, in which we wait for the opportunity to retaliate, to cause harm; we simply want that person to suffer. There is an additional type called spitefulness, when we wait for the opportunity to say nasty words that can hurt another's feelings. All these are different flavors of anger. In any of these situations, if we look into that emotion, or into the one who feels this emotion, we fail to find any concrete thing.

Anger, resentment, ill-will, spitefulness — all are nothing more than a mere movement of the attention. They are a seeming presence that is not made out of anything. The moment we look into an emotion, we find no thing. The emotion has no self-nature. The analogy given describes feelings as 'being merely like a gust of wind.' When you feel a gust of wind on your skin, is there anything to take hold of? No, because it is not substantial in the normal sense. You

don't have to think of the analogy as referring only to external wind. You can also think of it as the wind that moves within the channels of the body which causes our attention to flutter. Yet it is a mere movement, a seeming presence of thought, of cognition, of disturbing emotion. The moment we look into this movement, there is no thing. It is said it is empty of identity, possessing no core to it, like space.

"All things", meaning all things perceived as being outside, "are equal;" they are "like space." Whatever is perceived has no real identity. There is no substance to it — it is empty, so in that sense perceived things are like space, or equal to it. Space is used as an example because space has no color or concrete substance. This verse also implies that both outer and inner things, meaning both perceived objects and the perceiving mind, are equal in that they have no identity to them. They are all equal, like space, in being empty.

If you have doubts about anything, here's your chance to ask.

Student: During meditation practice I try to look directly at a disturbing emotion like anger. When I investigate the emotion, questioning, "What is it? Where is it? Where does it exist?" it seems like the harder I try, the more vivid it becomes, and it becomes more difficult to actually find the emotion itself. Somehow looking into the emptiness heightens the vividness of it. I was wondering if Rinpoche would discuss that. There's another aspect to that, too, which is that it's somewhat paralyzing, the simultaneity of it. It leaves me feeling dumbfounded, completely perplexed.

Rinpoche: There are two common mistakes in dealing with disturbing emotions in practice. One is to intellectualize the emotion. We think "It must be empty because this is what I've heard; therefore, this emotion is empty." We plaster over the naked emotion with the idea of emptiness. While the intellectual understanding is quite forceful in this case, it is not actual meditation experience. The actual practice is rather to face the disturbing emotion directly, without holding onto some idea about what a disturbing emotion is. Look in a naked way and ascertain what the real identity of the emotion is. Discover there is no 'thing' to

it; that it's empty. In this way, the disturbing emotion has no foothold upon which it can remain. It dissolves. However, if we only have the idea of it being empty, the experience of its emptiness is pressed into the background. That's one way that we could be mistaken.

The other is when we experience emptiness in actuality, but only for a fraction of a second. We look towards the emotion, and see that it's empty. Then we let it slide, thinking that it's sufficient. Actually, the direct experience of the emptiness of any emotion needs to be sustained, in order to totally uproot any basis for further continuation of the disturbing emotion. This is called 'straying into the remedy', or going astray as to what concerns the remedy. Whenever we feel a disturbing emotion we immediately use the idea of its emptiness as a hammer to knock the emotion on the head, so to speak. We then think that is sufficient. And we immediately become distracted again, until we remember to give the emotion another whack. That is not the correct way either.

Student: Do all these things have to do with relaxing, in a way?

Rinpoche: The remedy is not to figure out intellectually that the identity of an emotion is empty. It is to directly see this emptiness, and to sustain the continuity of this insight. By sustaining the continuity of the insight into emptiness, it becomes possible for all disturbing emotions to dissolve. That is the remedy.

Sometimes when we are angry we do really try to look into the empty essence of this anger. We look and we look, but at the same time in the corner of our mind we feel: "I should retaliate because what he or she did was really not right. Something has to be done about that. It's my responsibility to make sure that justice gets served." As long as we retain fondness for resentment and manage to justify it, it is very hard to penetrate to the core of the emptiness of the emotion.✦

10



IN THIS TEXT, *The Summary of Mahamudra*, Naropa explains the view under three headings: the Mahamudra of the perceived, the Mahamudra of awareness, and the Mahamudra of union. There are different traditions of teaching Mahamudra. Sometimes it is emphasized that one realizes the nature of the perceived, and after that the Mahamudra of awareness, which is mind. Another style maintains it doesn't matter much whether one understands that the objects perceived are, in fact, mind. That conviction is not as important as understanding and realizing the nature of the Mahamudra of awareness. However, in this text, the great pandita Naropa teaches first the Mahamudra of the perceived, then the Mahamudra of awareness in a gradual way.

The beginning verses on the Mahamudra of the perceived introduce us to the fact that what we perceive does not really exist, by nature. Moreover, it cannot be established as truly existing. It is emptiness. In the second verse we find that the perceiver, awareness, is likewise devoid of true existence by nature and is emptiness. In both of these cases, the empty quality rather than the cognizant quality is emphasized.

The third point under the view of Mahamudra is called the nature of the Mahamudra of union. The nature of mind is not only empty, but

cognizant as well. These two qualities of being empty and cognizant are an indivisible unity. first we are introduced to what we perceive and the perceiver as being empty and devoid of true existence. Understanding the emptiness of mind is not necessarily understanding the true nature of mind. Not only is the mind empty; it has the capacity to know, to cognize.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of union:

When speaking of 'Mahamudra,'
It is not an identity that can be shown.
Therefore the mind's suchness
Is itself the state of Mahamudra.

Now in this third verse about the Mahamudra of union, the first line states: "When speaking of Mahamudra." What is referred to as being Mahamudra? What do we take as the object of our meditation? What are we supposed to realize through our practice? Is Mahamudra a certain thing that can be pointed out and shown? No, Mahamudra is not an entity that we can hold in mind. It is not an object of our perception. It is not seen through the eyes, heard through the ears, smelled through our nose, tasted through the tongue, or felt through the body.

Mahamudra is not a thing that can be shown, and yet it is the very nature or suchness of our mind. Mind is explained as the six groups of cognitions or as the eight groups of cognitions. These six were mentioned previously as the consciousnesses of sight, sound, smelling, tasting, f touch, and the mind consciousness. 'Mind' implies a sense of clarity, an ability to be conscious, to cognize. Looking into what that actually is, it is impossible to find a place where that clarity or conscious quality abides. Mind is not made out of anything. This actuality of how the mind really is is called the 'suchness', and that itself is the state of Mahamudra.

What do we think of when we hear a statement like: "Emptiness not made out of anything whatsoever."? Since we are ordinary people

we think of something that is utterly void, like space. Space is empty, totally empty. There is no concrete substance which we call space. However, this is not the same as the empty essence of Mahamudra. Empty space is empty of any capacities, any properties. There is nothing wrong with space, nothing negative about it. It is merely the dimension that is empty of matter. When the question is raised, "Is the Mahamudra nature of mind identical with space?", the answer is no, because space doesn't have any positive qualities. There is no basis for the capacity of wisdom, knowledge, great bliss and all the other enlightened attributes. Even though there are no negative characteristics about space, there are no positive ones either. The total absence of good or evil characteristics is not the same as the Mahamudra nature of mind. The Mahamudra nature of mind, while being empty, does possess a nature of cognizance.

Our traditional guidance manuals explain that when seeking to understand the essence of Mahamudra, we should begin by investigating the arising, dwelling and disappearance of the thinking mind, the flow of thought. We usually feel that there is some 'thing' which experiences. That feeling is precisely what we should look into when a thought moves. We should question in these ways: "Where does a thought come from? What is the source of the thinker? From where does a cognition take place? Can we find a thought anywhere?" We should try not only to find the location of a thought, but also to determine how a thought is formed, and whether there is some substance to it. Looking into this very closely, we will sooner or later discover that there is neither a place of origin nor any thoughts to find anywhere, no matter how hard we search. Moreover, there is no 'thing' called mind which thinks or comes about from somewhere. After some investigation, we discover that the nature of mind is *nonarising*, which means that there is no origination of mind. Next we look into where mind abides. finally we examine where mind, the thinking, goes when it disappears. When mind vanishes, what is it that vanishes, and into which place or location does this vanishing happen? We likewise fail to

find any 'thing' that dwells anywhere, or that disappears. All this is because mind is not made out of any concrete substance whatsoever.

When we looked for this knowing entity called mind, and we failed to find any thing, is it because we somehow failed to look well enough? No, that's not so. Mind is not some thing that is out of reach. We are the ones who think and perceive, so our minds are something very close at hand which can be looked for. When we fail to find anything, the reason is none other than that there is no thing to find. Mind is not a concrete thing lying and waiting to be discovered. It is not that we needed to continue a little longer and eventually would have found it. Mind is unfindable. This is what the Third Karmapa stated in *The Aspiration of Mahamudra:* "It cannot be said to exist, since even the buddhas do not see it." What exactly does that mean? A buddha with perfect wisdom, should be capable of seeing the nature of mind, if such a thing existed. But if even a buddha cannot see a thing called mind, then definitely we as ordinary sentient beings will not be able to do so. Why is this? Again, it is because mind is not made out of anything whatsoever.[2]

The Buddha described the nature of mind exactly when he said: "Transcendent knowledge, *prajnaparamita*, is beyond thought, word and description." We cannot adequately find words that describe exactly how the nature of mind is. It is not possible to use thoughts to figure out, reason, and come up with a mental picture of how the nature of mind is, because. this nature, this 'transcendent knowledge', lies beyond both words and thoughts. It is inconceivable, beyond the grasp of normal intellect. When we searched and didn't find the nature of mind, did that mean there was no thing at all? Is the nature of mind void like physical space? No, it's not like that either. The next line in the Karmapa Rangjung Dorje's composition is: "You cannot say it is nonexistent, because it is the basis for both samsara and nirvana." Even though mind is not made out of anything, it's not totally non-existent.

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[2]. The entire song by Karmapa Rangjung Dorje is explained in *The Song of Karmapa*, (Rangjung Yeshe Publ.).

It is the basis for both samsara and nirvana. Our ignorance of this empty cognizance is the basis for the whole of samsaric existence. Seeing this empty cognizance clearly, exactly as it is, becomes the basis for progressing through the paths and bhumis towards complete enlightenment.

When an ordinary person hears about something that both exists and doesn't at the same time, it sounds like nonsense. If a thing exists, it is not non-existent. Conversely, if there isn't anything, you cannot say concurrently that it exists. For any other entity in this world, to be and not to be are a contradiction; it's either one or the other. However, the nature of mind doesn't really fall into either one of these two categories of existence or nonexistence. It is not our job to invent an adequate philosophical way of describing that which both exists and doesn't simultaneously. What we as practitioners need to do is simply experience how this nature of mind is — not merely figure it out intellectually. In the next line from the same verse, the Third Karmapa describes it thusly: "These two are not a contradiction, but the middle way of unity." There is no conflict between the essence of mind being empty and its nature being cognizant. While mind in essence is non-existent or empty, its nature is cognizant, able to perceive. When we look into this nature of knowing, we see it is not made out of anything whatsoever. It is empty. Being empty and cognizant are not a contradiction; on the contrary, they are an indivisible unity. That itself is what is called 'the middle path'. It is an honest, straightforward path that does not become a sidetrack or an error: it is simply the middle way of unity.

Ordinary people may think, "Oh, the nature of mind is beyond me; I don't have the ability to see it." We may think to truly realize the innate nature of suchness is quite difficult, and indeed, if we hold onto that attitude, it *is* hard! Fortunately, though, there were many great siddhas of the lineage who personally realized this nature. They very kindly gave pith instructions that we can receive and apply. When we persevere in these instructions and look into this mind, we discover

that it's not very difficult to recognize the nature of mind. After all, our mind is just our mind. It's not far away or out of reach. It is simply our own nature of mind, that which perceives. When looking into that which experiences, into this mind, it's not that difficult at all to see it as it is. We can understand first-hand that it is not made out of anything, and yet it is not a complete nothing. There is still experience; there is the ability to perceive and be awake. These two are not two different entities — one empty, another cognizant. Mind is not limited to being one or the other. That is why the Third Karmapa in his fourth line says: "May we realize the unconfined nature of mind."

It's possible in this context to doubt whether we can actually see the nature of mind. This problem arises particularly with people who have studied Buddhist philosophy. For instance, Shantideva, in the chapter on transcendent knowledge in the *Bodhicharya Avatara*,[3] uses examples to show how it is not possible for the mind to know or see itself. One example he gives is that of a sword: it can cut other things, but no matter how sharp the sword is, it cannot cut itself. Likewise a very strong, agile person can master other creatures. He can tame a horse, or even an elephant — but he cannot ride on his own back, no matter how strong he is. In this same way, the mind cannot see itself. Chandrakirti gave similar examples for how the mind cannot see or apprehend itself. When reading these lines of logic, we may doubt whether it's possible for the mind to see or realize itself. Honestly, though, this is not a problem. What Chandrakirti and Shantideva refute here is the possibility of the mind seeing itself as a concrete thing. They do not speak about the mind looking into itself and not seeing any entity. That is not what they are refuting — no need to be in doubt about that.

Both the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions of Buddhism speak about the view and how to realize it. Even though the word view is used in both cases, the identity of that view is not exactly the same. The Sutra system's view is called 'the view of utilizing inference'. Here,

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[3]. See *The Way of a Bodhisattva* (Shambhala Publ.).

we arrive at the view by deduction, through a process of investigating or inquiring further and further. In this process, one thinks, "It is probably true that the nature of mind is nothing whatsoever. It seems also to be true that it has a cognizant quality." This is all deduced through intellectual reasoning, and remains in the realm of thought. Yet it is possible through this intellectual understanding to feel convinced, to gain a very clear, precise conviction of how things are. By growing accustomed to this understanding, sooner or later we are able to see in actuality the innate nature of things. Even though this is a quite long path, the innate nature of things is eventually seen directly. The view of Vajrayana, in the context of Mahamudra or Dzogchen, is called 'the view which utilizes direct perception'. That means that our mind is not something we have to think of or find at some other place far away. It is right here – after all, it's our own mind, isn't it? There is no need for a lot of deduction. All that is necessary is to take a look at "How is this mind? Where is it?" We simply look, and by looking, we see directly how it really is. That is why it is called the view of utilizing direct perception.

Although in Mahamudra the view is introduced in direct experience, it is also possible for an individual to mistakenly approach it through inference or intellectual reasoning. One does this by not taking it personally, by not aiming for direct experience of Mahamudra. Instead, one thinks, "This is a profound idea I should grasp. Perceived objects do not really exist and my perceiving mind, my awareness, apparently doesn't really exist. These two are a unity. I must keep this understanding in mind." That is not what is really meant here in the context of Mahamudra. We should apply all these points to our own personal experience in a very clear and straightforward manner, rather than mistakenly intellectualizing our approach.

Next, among the three points about the Mahamudra of meditation, first stating the nature of the Mahamudra of the basic state:

The first section was about the view. Now we come to the next section about the Mahamudra of meditation, which also has three points. The practitioner is introduced to 'This is how it is'; the nature of things, the nature of our minds. Remember, Mahamudra is not apart from ourselves — it is our own nature. Meditation here means the training in growing used to that and making it a continual experience. While the first three points about the view are not hard to comprehend, the next three points about the Mahamudra of meditation are not as easy. This is because it is rather difficult to become genuinely accustomed to our nature. For countless lifetimes in samsaric existence we have been used to the exact opposite of realizing our nature. We have acted out of delusion and ignorance instead of from a state of knowing our minds. Instead of our attention facing towards its own nature; we have been extroverted, looking away from and being occupied with something other than our nature of mind. By repeating this pattern again and again, life after life, this ignorance has created an incredibly strong habitual tendency for not knowing the nature of our minds. Therefore, the training in the Mahamudra of meditation requires equally strong perseverance in the opposite direction.

There is another common doubt people express concerning Mahamudra meditation: "If Mahamudra is merely a matter of relaxing my mind into an unfabricated state of naturalness, then why do Tibetan Buddhists do all those complicated rituals? Why do they beat big drums, blow different types of horns, chant countless texts, perform lengthy ceremonies and jump around in their bizarre dance costumes? What do these elaborate rituals have to do with natural mind?" It is certainly true that Mahamudra is simply a matter of leaving mind in its natural state. Honestly, though, sometimes it just doesn't happen. Sometimes our minds won't remain relaxed and natural, no matter how hard we try. On these occasions we need to apply various methods to relax the mind. The buddhas and great masters have very kindly and skillfully designed different means to focus our attention and guide us to the point where we can simply relax into the state of Mahamudra.

These methods take different forms: music, ritual dance, visualizing deities; reciting great numbers of mantras, prostrating many times, and so forth. All these diverse ways are skillful means leading to the state of natural mind.

When we begin the practice of Mahamudra, although we may have an understanding of its nature, it is often not more than a short glimpse, a flash of insight that disappears and reappears. The continuity of the insight is not sustained at this point; there's no real stability in it, no steadiness, and no deep clarity or brightness. The instruction in shamatha is extremely helpful in dealing with this. There are many different details on how to practice shamatha to attain stability of mind. Nowadays the most popular method is to focus the attention on the movement of breath. Following the breathing is extremely beneficial. The Buddha himself said: "If discursive thoughts are predominant, place the attention on the inhalation and exhalation of your breath." When we shift our attention over to simply noticing the movement of breath, our thought involvement automatically subsides, and that is definitely very useful.

In the Mahamudra tradition the type of shamatha being cultivated is somewhat more subtle. The attention is not fixed on any specific focus like the breath. We simply pay attention to the empty and awake quality of mind and sustain that. We avoid involvement in thoughts about past, present, or future events. For example, we might spend a lot of time recalling: "Last year I went to such-and-such a place; I met so-and-so and did this and that. It was nice (or, it was not nice)," and so on. As soon as we notice that we are mentally 'following the past', we just take a break from that activity and let it go. Likewise with future thoughts: "Next year I'll go to that country. I'll meet so-and-so and I'll work on this project." That is called 'anticipating the future'. When you notice that you're doing that, just let it go; take a break from that. It's the same with thoughts, feelings or impressions we have about the present moment. Don't sit and make value judgments about them. When you notice you've gotten carried away; take a break from it. It's

much easier to see the nature of mind and stay with the empty, awake quality when we are disengaged from our constant preoccupation with thoughts of past, present and future.

Sometimes we get entangled in a thought pattern. There's a method called 'abrupt cutting' which is useful with very strong, forceful thoughts or opinions that we nurture. Abruptly cutting means we simply sever the involvement in that thought. You could say that it is a wrathful approach. A more peaceful way is known as 'letting go into whatever arises without fabrication.' This is easier to do with ordinary and relatively weak thoughts. Simply let the thought slide; let it subside all by itself without accepting or rejecting it. When this type of thought occurs just let it vanish, without trying to do anything in particular. If our mind is overtaken by forceful thoughts, we can cut that involvement abruptly. Using these two methods, we can deal with any type of thought.✦

11



EARLIER I SPOKE ON THE VIEW OF MAHAMUDRA and on its importance in creating a firm foundation for the meditation practice of Mahamudra. I also discussed the importance of shamatha, of stillness of mind or calm attention. I would like to stress that increasing one's presence of mind and cultivating the stability of shamatha should not be confined to the meditation session. We should try to be more mindful in all situations and at all times in our lives.

There is a famous saying that 'the spontaneous arising of the meditation state is due to the power of blessings'. 'Blessings' refers to a power or capacity that we can receive. Due to blessings, someone who has not experienced the meditation state will be able to experience it; someone not stable in the meditation state will become more stable; and someone whose meditation state is not that clear will gain clarity and alertness. In both Mahamudra and Dzogchen, the way to receive blessings from the lineage masters is through the preliminary practices of the four types, especially through the *guru yoga* practice. Do not apply the guru yoga only once in a while; but in all circumstances, remember to supplicate from the core of your heart your guru and lineage masters. In this way we receive blessings, which are extremely important.

In the Vajrayana tradition, it is often said one should regard the guru as equal to a buddha, or even as superior to a buddha. For non-Vajrayana practitioners, this might seem inappropriate. According to the general teachings of Buddhism only the fully awakened one, the Buddha, can be the object of supplication, veneration and devotion. To put someone else in his place as that supreme object might not feel right. Within Vajrayána, the Buddha is still the supreme object of our supplications and devotion. However the Buddha appeared in this world quite a long time ago. Even though we have connected with Buddhist practices and become Buddhists, there are centuries and centuries between ourselves and the Buddha. Because we didn't have the fortune to meet the Buddha in person and hear his teachings, we need someone or something to serve as a link between the Buddha and ourselves. This is exactly what our root guru does.

The qualities and activities of our personal teachers are of course not the same as those of the Buddha, in that they don't have the same power and depth. Yet for us as individuals, the blessings of the Buddha's qualities and activities reach us mainly through other people. Blessings are received in the most immediate way through a lineage of teachers. Our lineage gurus are thus extremely important, as they are a conduit. We receive blessings by connecting directly with masters, especially our root guru. For us as individuals, being with our guru is like being with the Buddha in person. Our root guru is therefore considered even more important than the Buddha, in the sense that he connects us directly with the teachings and the blessings. We should supplicate our root and lineage masters as often as possible in order to receive the blessings of the Buddha and the Dharma. For example, we can chant *Calling the Guru from Afar* from the core of our hearts, and make sincere, deep-felt supplications through guru yoga.[4] After supplicating, receive the empowerments by imagining that the rays of light

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[4]. *Calling the Guru from Afar* by Jamgön Kongtrül can be found in *Journey Without Goal*, (Shambhala Publ.), or as a separate chant booklet with extra verses for lineage masters, (Rangjung Yeshe Publ.).

from the gurus forehead, throat, and heart center dissolve into you, blessing your body, speech and mind.

What we need to realize is the nature of mind, the basic, natural state here called Mahamudra. This nature of mind has always been with us, throughout all our countless former lives in samsara. It is not like we somehow lost the nature of mind and now have to regain it – we simply have to recognize something that has always been with us. But if it's been continuously with us all this time, why haven't we realized it already? What is missing? The answer is that we lack the blessings. To recognize the nature of mind, we need to be infused with the power of blessings of the truth, the Dharma, passed from an enlightened one, a buddha, down through the realized lineage masters. The realization of this truth is what makes the difference. By receiving the blessings, we don't suddenly somehow get a new nature of mind that we didn't have before. Neither is it true that the longer we stay in samsara the more lost our nature becomes. No, it's totally unchanged, right with us all the time. Nevertheless, the ability to realize what is intrinsically present in ourselves depends upon the right circumstances — on whether or not we receive the blessings and are infused with this capacity to realize. The way to receive the blessings depends upon the sincerity of our openness, devotion, and trust. In order to open up our hearts and minds to trust, to devotion, to faith, it is important to make sincere supplications.

When I use the word faith, I don't mean unreasonable blind faith, but an open-mindedness that arises after we receive the blessings and understand they are a definite reality. It is not that we close our eyes and insist that it must be so because of what we have heard (and probably haven't understood). Buddhism advocates 'faith through knowing the reasons' — an appreciation that comes from comprehending the qualities of enlightenment that are deeper than our limited scope of experience. This allows us to open up and receive the blessings. These days, in my opinion, it seems that the scientific frame of mind which dominates Western culture creates somewhat of a barrier

to faith and devotion. The rational scientific approach to things is based on the unspoken premise that things must be tangibly perceived and measured before they can be proven to exist. Clinging to such a premise merely traps one within it. Try instead the premise, "Maybe it is possible to have a wider horizon than an ordinary human being." This opens one up to the possibility of receiving the blessings of enlightened beings.

> It is neither something to be corrected nor transformed,
> But when anyone sees and realizes its nature
> All that appears and exists is Mahamudra,
> The great and all-encompassing dharmakaya.

Among the three points about the Mahamudra of meditation, the first one states the nature of Mahamudra or the basic state. The beginning sentence — "It is neither something to be corrected nor transformed" — is extremely profound. What we are trying to realize is the basic state, the nature of our minds. Whatever the 'it' refers to – be it what is perceived in our experience; the perceiver; our mind; or the Mahamudra of union — we do not need to make up anything artificial about the nature of our minds or fabricate something that wasn't there before. We do not need to correct some flaw in the nature of mind and transform it into something good. We should not think that by training in Mahamudra there is a transformation taking place, that our nature is through the training somehow becoming something other than it already is. Our basic state is and always was the unity of emptiness and cognizance. Mahamudra training is simply a matter of recognizing how it is. By growing accustomed to this through training, it becomes an actuality. That is what is meant by realization. Thus, the Mahamudra of meditation does not involve correcting, contriving, or transforming anything. The next sentence is: "But when anyone sees and realizes its nature." 'Anyone' does not refer to a special person of a aristocratic family, or someone with a unique talent, but to any person. It doesn't matter whether the practitioner is young or old, important or

unimportant, learned or uneducated — none of those things are important in this context. When it's a matter of simply realizing the nature of mind, those specifics don't matter at all. That is why Naropa uses the word 'anyone'. What is necessary is to first recognize, then see and realize the nature of mind.

The Tibetan word used here for 'nature' literally means 'simply that'. The 'that' refers to the fact that the ultimate true nature is not apart from being the nature of the relative state of mind — it is simply its nature. That's why it's called 'simply that'. Since everyone has this nature, what is important is to be sincerely interested and to trust that it is possible to recognize it by looking. After looking, we need to see it; and after seeing it, we need to fully realize exactly how it is. Do not feel satisfied with intellectually having figured it out; or with inferring that it's probably like such-and-such. That is called 'clouding the nature of mind with inference,' or 'obscuring yourself with intellectual thoughts.' Instead, nakedly and directly see this nature as it is and realize it.

One danger in practicing Mahamudra is that we may confuse inferred knowledge with direct experience and fail to see the difference between what we figure out and what we see directly. These two can be mistaken. Naropa uses the word 'see,' rather than 'know' or 'understand,' to make sure that we don't make that mistake. In this context, the nature of mind is not an object of knowledge. It is not an entity that we inquire about, investigate and finally get an idea about and feel gratified. That would be what is called 'having a deduced or inferred idea of an entity held in mind'. To make sure that we get the point, Naropa uses the word 'to see,' which means like seeing something with the naked eye. When you see something, you don't have to have any idea about what it is in order to see it — you simply see it, directly and nakedly. What is necessary here is to let our mind simply look into itself and directly see how it is. Our mind is empty of any identity, and is cognizant by nature. These two qualities are indivisible. Knowing this is direct knowledge, attained by seeing in actuality. Milarepa, when giving the pointing-out instruction to Gampopa, said, "The view is

what it's about, so look directly into your own mind. It's like the master wrestler looking for his jewel, Gampopa." The analogy Milarepa used comes from an old myth about a master wrestler who had a jewel in his forehead. He often worried about whether he would lose it while wrestling. One day when he was really tired, his forehead wrinkled down over the jewel and covered it. When as was his habit he touched his forehead to see whether the jewel was still there, he didn't feel it. He got incredibly worried and went everywhere looking for it. He searched and groped around, but he couldn't find it. At some point he finally discovered that actually his jewel had been there all the time. The basic message Milarepa was giving Gampopa was: look into your own mind. Trying to figure out this nature by means of intellectual reasoning is not going to help. What is necessary is simply to relax and see it directly.

When training in this seeing, everything — all that appears and exists — is experienced as Mahamudra. Both that which is perceived and the perceiving mind have the identical nature of being the basic state of Mahamudra. If we grow accustomed to this through training and attain complete realization, everything is the great and all-encompassing Dharmakaya. The innate nature is seen as encompassing everything.

I would like to introduce one important key phrase for practice: 'rest freely in uncontrived naturalness'. Uncontrived naturalness doesn't mean deliberately trying to be natural or free. We should not endeavor to rid ourselves of whatever could be considered unpleasant in our meditation state. Conversely, we should not attempt to deliberately bring forth a state that is supposedly good. That's why the word 'uncontrived' is used. Resting freely is the exact opposite of being tight and constricted. Some people, who have a great interest in their meditation practice, sit down in an extremely intent frame of mind. They tighten their body into a stiff posture; while their mind is very resolute that it will be 100% concentrated. This tense state results in the muscles, tendons and spine being held very tightly. Sit like that for

a while and it becomes incredibly uncomfortable – so much so that one is unable to continue.

Actually, the best meditation is done in a totally relaxed state, when one is not constricting oneself or tightening up inwardly. Don't sit tensing your muscles and tendons; instead, freely and loosely remain at ease.

If we sit with a very tight posture, we may at times feel a tightness around the heart. Due to our overexertion we create undue pressure inside ourselves. Sometimes our brain might even feel squeezed from the sides, very tight and uncomfortable. There's no need to create that kind of situation. Rather, relax by letting be, and have a sense of setting yourself free. Letting be can be misunderstood as meaning to simply allow yourself to get carried away. We may imagine that the mind is permitted to take off and get involved in whatever emotion or thought that arises. That's a little too relaxed! You should be not too tight and not too relaxed, but hold both the body and the mind in a very free and easy way. This is important.

Another piece of advice given by many of the great meditators of the past is: put mindfulness on guard! In other words, place a watchman called 'presence of mind' on sentry duty. Be present and aware of what is taking place in the mind. Such attentiveness helps us to become aware of whether we are distracted or undistracted. Of course we know the difference between the mind resting naturally in itself or being carried away by memories or plans. But it is momentarily possible, and quite common, not to be fully present and to simply get lost in thought, oblivious to the fact that we are distracted. While mind has a singular nature — it does not have many parts — cognition can have different expressions or mental events. Some may be unvirtuous; some virtuous, and so forth. Among the various expressions of mind, one of the most important is a sense of presence, of being attentive – in other words, mindfulness. Mindfulness is simply mind being aware of what is happening.

Student: You spoke of cutting forceful thoughts wrathfully. How do we deal with forceful thoughts without being an accomplished meditator?

Rinpoche: What I mentioned about 'abrupt cutting' was in the context of shamatha, and referred to dealing with forceful thoughts, not weak ones. Please understand that any forceful thought gains its strength, the power that fuels it, only from oneself. This strength could be a strong fascination, as in, "I like to think about such-and-such!", or "I definitely must do such-and-such." There's a delicious taste we get from being involved in our thoughts. It is that clinging, that savoring of it, that reinforces the thought or the emotion. It's not that the thought by itself has some independent power. It's because we feel "All right, maybe I should be meditating, but this is such an interesting thought that I must spend a little more time on getting into its complete details." Remember that it is our fascination that makes the thought involvement stronger.

'Cutting abruptly' means you return to your senses, remind yourself that what you set out to do is not to sit and daydream about this and that, and then get down to the meditation training. Remind yourself, "I'm wasting my time. I'm not going to continue along that track; I'm going to return back to the main point." That action, that decision, is what cuts the forceful thought. To use an amusing analogy, it's like clubbing a pig on the snout. Imagine a big, hungry pig who sees food. To stop him, you have to whack him over the snout, because that's the only place he can really feel it. To whack the pig anywhere else will not faze him if he's really intent on eating.

Student: Didn't you say that the nature of the mind was beyond the four extremes of existing, not existing, both and neither? Is understanding that what 'seeing' means?

Rinpoche: Understanding the nature of mind to be beyond the four extremes of existing, non-existing, both and neither is different from seeing the nature of mind in actuality. The first statement is a tool used to convince us intellectually about how the mind isn't. Through this we get a certain intellectual conviction about mind, which is different than

seeing directly. The aim of inference is to be able to see directly afterwards. However, the focus, what is being inferred, is not the same as what is seen instantaneously through direct perception. There's definitely a difference.

Student: Is clubbing the pig on the snout the same as suppressing thoughts?

Rinpoche: The word 'suppressing', in Tibetan actually means reducing. The general method of reducing negative thoughts and emotions is to apply an antidote against them. For example, the remedy against anger is loving kindness and compassion. Even though this year we may not have been successful in avoiding being irritated, angry and resentful, we can try during the coming year to be more compassionate and kind. Then maybe it will be easier to deal with anger. If we look back, we might say that our anger has been 'suppressed.' It's not that it has been entirely squeezed out, but there is less of it – it has been reduced. That kind of reducing is not the same as clubbing the pig on the snout, which is a more immediate method. The force of your involvement in thought is your own clinging to it. When you remind yourself that actually this is a waste of time – when you tell yourself, "I'm supposed to be practicing meditation, I'll give it up" — that's called 'hitting the pig on the snout'. It is not that you just sit and think, "I shouldn't be thinking this." That doesn't help at all.✦

12



OF THE THREE POINTS ON MAHAMUDRA MEDITATION, I have covered the first one, which is "Stating the nature of Mahamudra of the basic state." Now I will discuss the second: "Stating the nature of the Mahamudra of how to realize," The way of realizing means, first, what needs to be realized, and second, the method of how to realize that. Earlier I mentioned the method as being uncontrived naturalness, or resting freely without fabrication, and I will now explain this further.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of realization:

> Naturally and without contriving, allowed to simply be,
> This unimagined dharmakaya,
> Letting it be without seeking, that is the meditation
> training.
> But to meditate while seeking is deluded mind.

It is possible to explain this in a very short and somewhat unpolished way. We can also get into all sorts of fine details about how to practice and train in Mahamudra. One of these ways is called 'looking while being still'. 'Still' in this context refers to shamatha, which we have cultivated to some extent. We feel that our mind is quiet, our attention remains calm, and we are concentrated. There is a sense of being fully relaxed and at peace. During this time when our

attention remains at peace, look into what exactly it is that remains at peace. Question yourself, "Where does it remain? How does it remain? What is the 'it' that remains? What is its identity?" By simply looking into this, we fail to find any concrete entity that is at peace, that remains calmly. This stillness of mind that has no real concrete identity to be found is how it really is — this is the basic state. Yet, at the same time, it feels as if there is a mind which is calm and resting in stillness. This feeling is only superficial, because the moment we investigate the question: "Does this mind have a dwelling place? Is there something that abides calmly?", we find nothing. At the same time there is a feeling of stillness! The seeming and the real, the relative and the ultimate, are thus indivisible. While remaining calm in shamatha, we can see the mind as it actually is by looking into its nature. Unfortunately our mind is not always still. Sometimes it moves into a thought or an emotion, and there is also a method to look into its identity at those times.

When we leave our peaceful state of shamatha meditation and begin to think; this thinking seems more tangible than the stillness. Strong thoughts, such as emotions, give us the very distinct impression that: "I am thinking, I am feeling such-and-such about that." Anger, attachment, jealousy, stupidity, and pride are all particularly strong attachments, which create a very clear understanding that "I am feeling." Even during the more subtle formation of concepts or neutral ideas, it still seems like something is arising or being formed in our mind. We must look into this thinking or feeling to discover whether or not there actually is some 'thing', some entity there which thinks or feels. There are two ways that we could do this. One is to label thoughts when they arise or move: "Well, now there's a thought; there's another thought." With this method, we are one step behind in pursuit of the thought, always attaching a label to it. This is not a technique of Mahamudra. In Mahamudra, the practitioner looks directly into that which thinks. He or she doesn't label it as being such-and-such. Through this type of practice we discover that thoughts and emotions have no concrete

identity, in exactly the same way as we discovered that stillness had no identity.

The great siddhas of the past used a very nice analogy for thought movement, comparing it to the movement of wind through empty space. Like the wind, it seems like there is something, but there is nothing to see when we look. The wind has no visible color or form, does it? It is the same with thoughts and feelings. If we are unaware of our fixated attention and do not look into the thinker, we will not recognize that there is no entity there. We continue along with our fixation unaware and unknowing. On the other hand, the moment we look towards the thinker, into the identity of what thinks, we are at a complete loss to see anything. This is not because we somehow missed the point: it is simply because there is no 'thing' to see.

Whether we look into the essence of the knower while being still or while thinking, in both cases there is no concrete 'thing' that is still or that thinks. This is simply our basic state; how it is all by itself. This is the unimaginable Dharmakaya, which is only a matter of simply looking and seeing it as it is. There is no need to form a description of how it is or to conceptualize it. This is what was mentioned before as 'being beyond thought, word and description'. The word 'unimaginable' means 'impossible to think of as an object of thought'. The nature of mind is empty in essence and cognizant by nature; these two are indivisible. This Dharmakaya is the real condition, the basic state. "Letting it be without seeking," without thinking. This is not something that we will discover at a later point in time; nor is it something that we need to seek in a far-away place. "Letting it be without seeking, that itself is the meditation training."

Remember the line in one of the chants we do, the *Dorje Chang Chenma*, which says: "The essence of thought is dharmakaya, it is taught."? If we try to understand that statement in terms of intellectual reasoning, it seems impossible. It doesn't make sense. After all, isn't it thinking itself which obscures dharmakaya? From our personal point of view, it seems like when there is thinking there is no dharmakaya, and

when there's dharmakaya there is no thinking. As a matter of fact, the basic nature within the thinking — meaning the very identity of what thinks — is itself dharmakaya. From this perspective, there is no conflict whatsoever. It's true that being involved in a thought is not dharmakaya, but remember: the very essence of that which thinks is dharmakaya. Don't keep the attitude that thought is impure and has to be cast away, while dharmakaya is pure and should be held on to. Such intellectualization only makes it more difficult to realize this nature, how it really is.

As I mentioned several times before, while training in knowing this, we can fall prey to intellectualizing. Instead of seeing what basically is, we set up our own version by making concepts about it, thinking, "This is emptiness! This is the clarity, the cognizant quality." Rather than acknowledging that our basic state is simultaneously empty and cognizant, we create our own conceptual model of an empty and a cognizant quality, and try to fuse them together. That effort is nothing more than a creation of more thoughts — 'thought building,' we could say. Such involvement, however subtle or intelligent it might be, blocks off the direct seeing of the natural state. Hence the last line, "But to meditate while seeking is deluded mind"

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of indivisibility:

Just as with space and a magical display,
While neither cultivating nor not cultivating
How can you be separate or not separate!
This is a yogi's understanding.

Now for the third among the three points of the Mahamudra of meditation, "Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of indivisibility." The indivisibility of the perceiver and the perceived means that their essence is not two different things. It simply manifests different aspects of the same identity, which form an integral unity. Mipham Rinpoche, in his commentary on the chapter of transcendent knowledge in the *Bodhicharya Avatara*, mentions that some people

misunderstand the nature of the perceived, meaning of phenomena, and of mind. They think that what we experience is real and concrete, while emptiness is totally non-existent, like the horns of a rabbit. When one has such concepts in mind, the unity of appearance and emptiness is like tying together a white and a black string and calling that 'the unity of appearance and emptiness'. If one insists on misunderstanding the nature of things this way, one will also misconstrue the unity of what is perceived and its emptiness. We should instead understand the perceived to be more like a magical illusion, while emptiness is like the space within which this magical illusion occurs.

It is also necessary to realize that appearance and emptiness do not cancel each other out. It is not that emptiness is lost once there is appearance. At the very instant of appearing, the identity of this appearance is empty — intangible like a dream. It is not necessary to negate the presence of what was dreamt for a dream to be empty. For example, when you dream of a mountain with all its distinct features, it is vividly present,· crisp and clear. At the same time there is no real mountain whatsoever — it's empty. This emptiness of the mountain does not get lost in any way because of its apparent presence in the dream. The lucid experience of a dreamed mountain occurs even though it has no true existence. Similarly, we perceive at the same time that the object of our perception has no concrete identity. In other words, its emptiness coexists with its being present.

That is why Naropa says: "Just as with space and a magical display." 'Space' here represents the empty quality, while the magical display is what we perceive while experiencing. The magical display is not other than space itself. When a magical display is visible, it is not that it had to move out of space to another location in order to manifest. It occurs in space – in a way we could say it is space that is somehow made visible. The magic is indivisible from the space itself.

In the next sentence, "While neither cultivating nor not cultivating," the word 'cultivating' and meditating is the same in the Tibetan. We

don't have to make an artificial creation through an act of meditation. We should not construct a fake state and call it Mahamudra. On the other hand, looking into the essence is not without cultivating, in some sense. It is not that we totally let go and carry on forming ordinary deluded concepts as usual.

The result of that kind of training is described in the line "How can you be separate or not separate!" It is not the case that we are divorcing or separating ourselves from the thinking which is some entity that we have to throw away. At the same time, being not separate means acknowledging that the very basic state, the identity of that which thinks, is no 'thing' whatsoever that needs to be gotten rid of. In this way, we are neither separate nor not separate. We can say that cultivating and not cultivating is like the path, while being neither separate nor not separate is the fruition.

"This is the yogi's understanding" means that this is what can be accomplished. When we become truly trained in this way, we will realize the basic state. While trying to train, of course, we inevitably encounter some difficulties. One possibility is that we become dull and absent-minded. Maybe we feel a little bit shut down, tired and drowsy. Another difficulty is to be carried away by thought and become agitated. On these occasions thoughts seem to be a little too vigorous, too active. It becomes impossible to abandon thinking about this and that. While these obstacles do not exist in the nature of mind, unfortunately they can arise on the path. The different manuals on how to train in Mahamudra offer techniques on ways to handle these two situations.

Let's examine the two problems of dullness and agitation a little further. There are different reasons why we become agitated when trying to practice. first is attachment, or desire. Thinking of some situation we were in where we enjoyed ourselves, we want to get back and re-experience the happiness we felt. We feel attached to that experience and we start making plans about how we can recreate it and feel that same joy we had. Another way we can make ourselves agitated is through anger

or aversion. We focus on our enemy or someone we hold a grudge against, thinking, "He did such a terrible thing to me! It was wrong; and now I should do something to hurt him back." This kind of feeling belongs to anger and ill-will. Making plans about what to do about someone we don't like definitely disturbs our meditation state. Then there's regret, where we feel guilty about an action we did in the past. While practicing, we think: "I really shouldn't have done that. It was inappropriate. I'm a bad person." We make ourselves feel guilty and cultivate that feeling. A fourth way to produce agitation is indecisiveness, doubt, feeling unsure about what to do: "Should I do such-and-such, maybe it's a good idea — wait a minute, no, maybe I shouldn't do it." We waver back and forth, creating thought after thought. These are four basic ways of being agitated.

There are many different remedies for agitation, including changing our attitude, shifting our physical position, or adjusting our visual focus. When trying to change your attitude, remind yourself that nothing lasts. This situation, like everything else, changes. It's guaranteed to be fleeting. Happy moments never last, and neither do unhappy feelings of hurt or sadness. There's no point in all this involvement. It's futile. Since everything is impermanent, why bother? That kind of reminder is very helpful in this situation.

We can remedy agitation by shifting our physical situation. The ways to do that may sound a little strange, but they may prove beneficial. One method is to draw the window curtains to make the room a little more dim, which might help calm your mind. Another solution is to put on more clothing and make yourself warmer. Or, if you are sitting too straight, relax slightly so that your body loosens up a little. These three methods can help reduce agitation.

The other major disturbance to the meditation state is dullness or drowsiness, both of which cause us to feel unclear. first we feel a little drowsy, then dull, and eventually we fall asleep. Since that definitely obscures the meditation state, we need to apply a remedy. One is to inspire our attitude by thinking of the qualities of the awakened state of

the Buddha, of the Dharma, of the practice of samadhi. Think of the great benefit and the immense fortune to have the opportunity right now to progress on the path to enlightenment. If we inspire ourselves and deeply appreciate this great fortune, we'll wake up and won't feel as drowsy. Second, we can change our physical situation by taking off some layers of clothing so that we're less warm. We might also open up the curtains and the windows, making the room brighter and airier. Straighten your physical posture, consciously concentrating and tightening up your body. All those things help us to wake up and not feel obscured or dull.

The third way of remedying both agitation and dullness is to adjust our visual focus and to imagine something. In the case of agitation, imagine a tiny black four-petaled flower facing downwards at your heart center. Visualize it as being, the size of a pea, with a little sphere, also black, in the center. It sinks down and remains beneath our body, on the seat. Keeping the attention on that helps to reduce the feeling of agitation. To remedy dullness, imagine a white flower facing upwards. It also has a little sphere the size of a pea in the center, which ascends and hovers at the top of our head, bright and clear. This helps to remedy the feeling of being drowsy or dull.✦

13



UP UNTIL NOW I HAVE COVERED the Mahamudra of the view and the Mahamudra of meditation. Now we have arrived at the third point, which is the Mahamudra of conduct. The first part of this is combined with the view, in other words, conduct combined with the view.

Once more, for the three points about the Mahamudra of conduct, first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of self-liberation:

All the good deeds and harmful actions
Dissolve by simply knowing this nature.
The emotions are the great wisdom;
Like a jungle fire, they are the yogi's helpers.

These words are particularly suited to those who have understood the basic view and have realized it in actuality – those who have reached a high level of experience. Since we are beginners, it is not quite appropriate for us to follow these instructions to the letter. In the case of ordinary sentient beings, there is always something that we need to avoid or to abandon.

We may have tremendous interest in spiritual practice, in the Dharma. We may have pursued that interest and succeeded in meeting a qualified master, to the point where we have received profound

instructions. We may even have put them into practice, and to some extent have had personal experience of the state of samadhi. All that is of course very well, it's excellent. But maybe we are not really progressing in meditation training. We may feel, "I've practiced meditation all these years but I haven't gotten any genuine results; I haven't reached fruition yet. Why is this?" It is because of not having 'made use of the conduct' in the sense of using every moment in our lives as part of the training. The conduct hasn't taken effect. Remember the quote from Gampopa which says, "Although your view is as high as the sky, be scrupulously careful in your actions and behavior." Regardless of whether or not we have realized a very high view and experienced the natural state; be very careful in what to accept and reject.

As sentient beings we create karma through our physical actions. It's crucial that we do our best to avoid creating any negative karma and that we act to create positive karma instead. Since we create karma through the words we say, we should make up our minds to avoid saying words that harm others and to use our voice to create positive karma. It's the same with our thoughts, which likewise create both positive and negative karma. It is extremely important to form the attitude to avoid indulging in harmful thoughts as much as possible. Try to cultivate the perspective of wanting to improve both self and others. Please be conscientious and careful in all actions. This is incredibly important.

As ordinary people, we of course make mistakes, but that's not what matters here. What matters is that we make up our minds to sincerely attempt not to indulge in negative actions any longer. Sometimes we succeed in this, while other times we'll fail. Still, we should engender the attitude that "I will try my best to avoid the ten unvirtuous actions as much as I'm able, and to do what is helpful and beneficial for myself and others." Most of you probably know the ten unvirtuous actions — the three of body, the four of speech, and the three of mind. We should form the resolve that "In the past I wasn't that careful in avoiding what is negative to others; but from now on I will be." Forming a

determination to refrain from harm in the future and a sense of remorse for the harm we've done in the past is important. We shouldn't think, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it. It's my nature." Then it will be very hard to progress, to create what is positive and avoid what is negative. Instead, develop the frame of mind that "I will strive to avoid evil and do what is good." This is essential.

You might notice that becoming intoxicated or drugged is not mentioned among the ten unvirtuous actions. Since it is not openly referred to, it may not seem to be particularly harmful. Still, it does cause the practitioner to be less careful, attentive and discriminating. For those reasons it is not a particularly good idea. We should put emphasis on being conscientious and developing presence of mind. Always be mindful in any situation and cultivate the state of meditation as much as possible.

Concerning good deeds, the Buddha taught extensively on the six transcendent actions, the *six paramitas*. The first one is transcendent giving, or generosity, which can explained as three kinds: the giving of material things, the giving of protection against fear, and the giving of the truth, which means Dharma teachings. Giving material things means to give other beings what they need, be it food, medicine, clothing, or shelter. By this type of generosity we are able to relieve their suffering and distress. The second, protection against fear, is to give the means to relieve suffering. Whether beings endure physical or mental pain, we should provide care so that they will feel more at ease and not be unhappy. The third, the giving of the truth, is giving Dharma teachings. This entails offering the methods on how to reduce disturbing emotions, advice in what to avoid and adopt; and giving special teachings on how to practice the true spiritual path.

The second of the six paramitas is that of transcendent discipline, which is also of three types. The first is the discipline of refraining from evil — in other words, avoiding any action, speech or attitude that is harmful towards others or to oneself. The second is the discipline of creating goodness, which means to act, speak, and harbor an attitude

that is benevolent and helpful. The third one is called 'the discipline of acting for the welfare of other beings.' The first two refer to our own behavior, what we avoid or adopt, while the third is to do something that helps and benefits other beings.

The third of the six paramitas is that of transcendent patience. The first type is called 'the patience of taking no offense when hurt'. When ordinary people are harmed by others, the natural response is to retaliate. If we investigate the outcome of taking revenge, however, we find the end result is only more pain, as it is motivated by anger or resentment. Retaliation doesn't delete the previous hurt; nor does it bring happiness. Thus to seek revenge is a mistaken idea. Instead, try to continue the practice you know, especially that of sustaining the natural state. In that way, be carefree about being hurt.

The second type is called 'the patience of having definite confidence in what is to be realized,' which means not to fall prey to discouragement. Do not be disheartened and think, "I do all this practice and nothing comes out of it. Maybe there is nothing to be realized; maybe all this effort is worthless." This is not true. Meditation training definitely leads us to a positive result. Having confidence and trust in that realization is the second kind of patience. The third is called 'the patience of gladly undertaking hardship,' — not minding if there are difficulties. We shouldn't give up, even when working for the benefit of self and others is not easy or smooth. To gladly undertake any hardship encountered and carry on is the patience of happily undertaking difficulties.

The fourth of the six paramitas is that of exertion, perseverance, or diligence. It refers to diligence in doing what is good or beneficial and in avoiding what is harmful. Basically it is laziness that prevents us from being diligent. There are three types of laziness. The first is the basic laziness of being indolent; feeling "I can't do anything," and not wanting to either. The second one is the laziness of clinging to habitual activities; for example, having a strong tendency towards killing

animals. Because it's a habit, we aggressively feel, "I don't want to give it up; I don't even want to question it."

The third form of laziness is called 'the laziness reinforced by oneself'. This the laziness of self-deprecation, or discouraging oneself. We may have all the circumstances that are necessary for persevering in special practice: we have a precious human body, complete with the eight freedoms and ten riches; we have met a spiritual teacher and received the teachings, and so forth. There is nothing that should prevent us from practice, yet. still we harbor thoughts like: "I cannot, I'm unable, I'm no good, I'm a bad person, I'm weak." Those types of indulgent thoughts are a form of laziness. These three types of laziness should definitely be abandoned.

The fifth paramita is that of meditative concentration. There are two types: the mundane or worldly and the supramundane, beyond worldly states. Mundane concentration refers to meditation states we get into without having entered the practice of the true Dharma, the sublime truth. In other cases we may have entered Dharma practice, but we have not fully formed a true resolve towards enlightenment, towards benefiting others. Our concentration thus lacks a sound basis. It's true that the meditation state we cultivate without this true foundation can give temporary relief from suffering, and may provide states of subtle pleasure and peace. However, since there is no substance within it for liberation and enlightenment, these experiences are temporary and always wear off. Because we always return to ordinary samsaric situations; these are called mundane levels of concentration.

Supramundane meditation comes about from fully forming the resolve of bodhichitta. Engender the wish to abandon all obscurations, disturbing emotions and thoughts; and to truly accomplish the basis for benefiting others. Any practice we do on that foundation, even ordinary shamatha, becomes the support for bodhichitta. Furthermore, it unfolds as the support for the profound insight of vipashyana that can be discovered and cultivated. This is why it is said that the true shamatha,

which is the source or root of all virtues, is called transcendent concentration.

The sixth paramita is that of transcendent knowledge. Knowledge is the most important of all because the root cause of samsaric existence is ignorance, the opposite of knowing. How do we develop knowledge? The Buddha has taught that we begin by learning. A certain type of knowledge results from studying what the Buddha taught. But it is not only the words of the Buddha from which we can learn. From the Tibetan Vajrayana perspective, the *shastras* — treatises that are commentaries on the Buddha's words — are considered even more important. The reason is that in the sutras the Buddha would sometimes teach the definitive meaning, and other times would teach in a way that was more expedient. It was not always clear to people as to what was what. The commentaries by great panditas clearly distinguish what is the definitive and what is the expedient meaning. Studying these clarifies the words of the Buddha. Even more important than the treatises are the pith instructions. Instructions by the mahasiddhas of the past sometimes came in the form of *dohas,* spiritual poetry such as the vajra songs of Mahamudra. Even more beneficial are oral instructions from our own root teacher, which condense the essential points into a very applicable, concise way. We need to study, listen, and learn. That is the first step, the knowledge of learning.

The second type of knowledge is the knowledge of reflection. The Buddha said: "Analyze my teachings as carefully as you would test gold before buying it." You don't unequivocally believe the seller who claims that the gold is pure. You need to test it yourself before buying it. There are various ways that people check gold: they can cut it, rub it on a stone, or melt it. Melted gold should have uniform properties all the way through. To feel confident a piece of gold is pure, we need to examine it thoroughly and gain certainty about it. The Buddha continued: "Don't accept my words without questioning. You must discriminate and examine them for yourself." It is always possible that a statement could have been misquoted or some extra words added.

Perhaps we cannot easily differentiate whether the Buddha was referring to the definitive or expedient meaning. Therefore, we must investigate and analyze before reaching assurance. This certitude we arrive at is called 'the knowledge from reflection'.

The third type of knowledge is called 'the knowledge from meditation training'. We do not relinquish disturbing emotions by simply knowing how to do so: that comes about from growing used to abandoning them. It results from training, and from personal application of the knowledge that arises from that. By training in a sustained way, we come to the point where we can actually abandon disturbing emotions.

I have now briefly mentioned the ten virtuous actions, the ten unvirtuous actions and the six paramitas. Occasionally differences arise as to what is correct or not correct. Ultimately it depends on the circumstances and the individual's attitude and motivation. We have to judge very carefully the distinction between what is right and wrong. For example, to take a life is usually a very negative evil action that creates suffering and conflict. Nevertheless, there are rare occasions when taking a life can be very beneficial. For instance, there's a famous story about one of the past lives of the Buddha, when he was captain of a ship with 500 merchants traveling aboard. On the same ship was a criminal who wanted to kill the 500 merchants by sinking the vessel. The captain discovered this and decided to kill the criminal before he killed the others. It may have looked like a negative action, but actually it was very expedient; as the lives of 500 people were saved. Back to the text, and the line that states, "All good deeds and harmful actions dissolve by simply knowing this nature." In general, without knowing this nature, it is definitely important to avoid all involvement in evil actions; and to do as many positive actions as possible. During the actual situation of knowing the natural state, however, there's little reason to be either attached to virtuous actions or be afraid of unvirtuous ones, because all frames of mind dissolve into the basic state.✦

14



I WILL NOW CONTINUE with the Mahamudra of conduct. The root verse says: "All good deeds and harmful actions, dissolve by simply knowing this nature." It is not only good and bad thoughts that are liberated by knowing the nature of mind. Disturbing emotions, are transformed as well into the great wisdom, original wakefulness.

The Buddha mentioned different types of disturbing emotions in various contexts. For instance, in the collection of scriptures that belong to Abhidharma, he spoke of the ten primary disturbing emotions and the twenty subsidiary disturbing emotions. However, the most familiar classification for the disturbing emotions in both Sutra and Tantra is the three or five poisons, which are attachment, anger, delusion, pride and envy.

These five disturbing emotions have the nature of the five great wisdoms. When speaking of transforming disturbing emotions into wisdom or original wakefulness, we should first of all understand what the root of a disturbing emotion is. They all have a common basis — ignorance or unknowing, the source from which all disturbing emotions unfold. Ignorance means to be unaware of the real condition, the basic state. It is because of ignorance that confusion can take place and unfold as disturbing emotions.

Disturbing emotions lack the quality of being clear and lucid. Wisdom is seeing things exactly as they are. There are two aspects of wisdom, the first being the wisdom of knowing the unconditioned nature as it is, and the second being the wisdom of seeing all conditioned things that can possibly exist. The first one is to realize that no phenomenon has any true identity; that all things are empty of any essence. Does that mean that an enlightened person in a state of wisdom does not perceive anything? Is enlightenment a vacant, dull state? No, absolutely not. While knowing the innate nature, there is a clear and distinct seeing of the relative aspect. That is the second type, 'the wisdom that sees all possibly existent conditioned things'.

To go into more detail, the five wisdoms represent five aspects of original wakefulness. The first, the quality of seeing the empty essence, is called dharmadhatu wisdom, while seeing that all phenomena are equal in nature, or are of the same taste, is the wisdom of equality. These two wisdoms primarily belong to the wisdom that knows the nature as it is. The remaining three aspects of wisdom – the mirror-like wisdom, the discriminating wisdom and the all-accomplishing wisdom — primarily belong to the wisdom that sees all possibly existing things.

To reiterate, ignorance is to be unaware of our basic nature. Some teachings, when speaking of transformation or of purifying the five disturbing emotions, say that by abandoning the five poisons one realizes the five wisdoms. Other scriptures that have a slightly higher perspective say that the five disturbing emotions are basically transformed into the five wisdoms. Whichever way it is phrased, the five disturbing emotions dissolve and the five wisdoms unfold as part of the transformative process. Let's look at this process more closely, examining the disturbing emotions and their accompanying wisdoms one by one.

The first of the disturbing emotions is delusion. The opposite of delusion is to be aware of the innate nature. By growing accustomed to that, the quality of not knowing gradually fades away. We call that the transformation of ignorance or delusion into the wisdom of dharma-

dhatu. The nature of all phenomena is seen as 'nonarising'; and is indivisible with the basic sphere or dharmadhatu.

The mirror-like wisdom is the basic purity of or the transformation of anger. Due to not knowing our innate nature, there is an instinctive attachment to the belief in a 'me'. At the same time, there is an instinctive aversion towards that felt to be 'not me' — the 'other'. This clinging is very deep-rooted and gives rise to intense fixation and manifold complexities. At the same time, there is always the possibility of the mirror-like wisdom. The analogy here is that of a mirror: an image reflected in a mirror appears very distinctly, even though there is no 'thing' in the mirror. It is empty of any substantial entity and yet visible. Once someone realizes the basic state and sees the empty nature of all things, experience still takes place. Experience unfolds like the images reflected in a mirror. Everything is seen, but there is no attachment to these images as having any concrete substance. In this way, there is no opportunity for anger to arise.

The wisdom of equality is the transformation of pride. Seven kinds of pride are mentioned in the scriptures. Basically, pride or conceit, however, is the attitude of regarding others as inferior and oneself as superior. It is based on cultivating a fondness for ourselves as special and then focusing on that in a sustained way, out of ego-clinging. There are different degrees of being conceited; for instance, the fixation on oneself as extraordinary and other people as inferior. To regard oneself as superior among equals is a medium type of pride, while feeling superior to people who are even better than oneself is extreme conceit. Then there is the pride of believing oneself to have qualities that one doesn't, and the conceit of thinking oneself to be free of faults that one does have. These types of pride all dissolve when one grows more accustomed to realizing the real condition. It fades away and leaves place for what is called the wisdom of equality or sameness. This wisdom comes from seeing that everyone in their basic nature is equal. There is not even a mustard-seed of difference in the qualities of the basic nature of anyone. That is called the wisdom of equality.

Discriminating wisdom is the transformation of attachment. Not knowing the basic state, we lack clarity as to what is beneficial and harmful, what is good and evil. Real discrimination is missing. This attachment and involvement create a tremendous amount of complications because we are unable to see clearly what is valuable and what is unwholesome. Conversely, as we grow more accustomed to knowing the nature of Mahamudra, the real condition, this attachment dissolves and is changed into discriminating wisdom. Discriminating wisdom means realizing emptiness; through which everything is seen exactly as it is, distinctly and unblurred.

All-accomplishing wisdom is the transformation of envy. We often become envious when seeing other people's qualities, happiness, good fortune, wealth and enjoyments, thinking: "Why shouldn't I have that?" We are unhappy when others have something we don't, and based on this feeling, we may wish to harm them. This envy prevents us from carrying out the tasks we need to accomplish. When we try to undermine other people, we cause unhappiness not only for ourselves but for them as well. Any involvement motivated out of envy creates misery. The more we train in the nature of Mahamudra, the more envy subsides and dissolves. It transforms into the ability to carry out what needs to be carried out, which is called the all-accomplishing wisdom. Exactly how do the five poisons transform into the five wisdoms? In the Sutra teachings, the Buddha taught how to deal with disturbing emotions through five different methods of changing oneself. The first method is to keep one's distance from emotions. Try to be clear about the negative characteristics of involvement in disturbing emotions. Understand that being hateful and undertaking actions that cause disquiet brings nothing but suffering. Out of attachment we become involved in various miseries. Remember that the disturbing emotions of anger, delusion, pride and jealousy are not beneficial in the slightest, but are extremely harmful. Again and again they create problems for ourselves and others. Engender the attitude that, "It's a bad idea to continue like that. I should change." This frame of mind doesn't totally

eliminate our tendencies to be involved in disturbing emotions. Still, it makes it easier to not leap directly into them the next time the opportunity arises. Hence the first step is called 'keeping distance'.

The second remedy is called 'reducing disturbing emotions'. This doesn't mean suppressing them, in the sense that we take a disturbing emotion and force it down. It is a progressive occurrence that takes place naturally as a result of shifting our attention away from normal involvement in an emotion. We do this by cultivating a concentrated, calm state of mind again and again. Through practicing shamatha, through deeply relaxing, we keep out of complex entanglements, and our mind gradually becomes more peaceful. By developing a sense of presence of mind which helps us to be attentive and alert in any situation; we are more likely to notice whether or not we are getting carried away by disturbing emotions. Before training in the concentrated, calm state of mind of shamatha, we didn't even notice ourselves becoming lost in anger attachment, jealousy, pride. Now, because of being more mindful, we become aware of when these emotions take place. Due to the cultivation of mindfulness, calmness and openness, it's easier to refrain from getting further entangled in a disturbing emotion. This natural subsiding or diminishing is therefore called the remedy of 'reducing disturbing emotions'.

The third remedy the Buddha taught is called the remedy of 'uprooting disturbing emotions', which means to totally obliterate the emotion from its very core This elimination is thorough and complete, not merely a temporary release. In terms of the Sutra teachings, it becomes possible when one has become accustomed to directly seeing the basic state of the emptiness of disturbing emotions. According to Vajrayana, involvement in disturbing emotions falls away through cultivating insight into the natural state of Mahamudra, or the Great Perfection of Ati Yoga. This is not the case for someone who hasn't fully stabilized insight into the basic nature. This insight is called 'clear seeing' or vipashyana in the Sutra system. If our level of proficiency in recognizing our nature is sporadic, with no true sustained stability, then

we will not always be able to allow a disturbing emotion to dissolve. It is necessary is to apply the practice of Mahamudra directly in these instances. It does not help much to merely claim that the basic nature of this emotion is emptiness. Rather, at the moment the disturbing emotion arises, look nakedly into that which feels angry or attached. You will immediately see the reality of the nature of this disturbing emotion as being totally devoid of any concrete identity. We see it as it is because it is empty. In the moment of seeing that there is no substance to that which gets involved in the disturbing emotion, the disturbing emotion dissolves and is liberated. When we grow stable in recognizing and make this practice an actuality, we no longer become involved in the disturbing emotion. That is 'uprooting' in the true sense of the word, isn't it?

Naropa says: "The emotions are the great wisdom; like a jungle fire, they are the yogi's helpers." When a jungle catches fire, the bigger the jungle the bigger the fire. Since we are beginners, the more we can apply the remedy, the more opportunity there is for realizing wisdom, basic wakefulness. In this way the emotions are helpers or assistants for the practitioner.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of equal taste:

How can there be staying or going?
What meditation is there by fleeing to a hermitage?
Without understanding this, all possible means
Never bring more than temporary liberation.

To continue: "How can there be any staying or going?" This means that even while walking or moving about, of course we can still realize this nature. Our nature does not go anywhere or stay anywhere; it is always with us. It cannot possibly be some 'thing' that either stays or goes. Similarly, it does not become more present by going to the mountains and living in a hermitage. Our nature does not change according to circumstances. Therefore, moving about, staying some-

where, going or not going to the mountains — all these are superficial attributes that are not found in the basic nature itself.

If you have any questions, you can ask now.

Student: Could you please clarify what it means when Naropa says: "While neither cultivating nor not cultivating, how can you be separate or not separate!" I didn't fully understand.

Rinpoche: Let's look at the first part, "While neither cultivating nor not cultivating." The basic nature of Mahamudra is not made out of anything whatsoever — it's just naturally so. It's definitely not some 'thing' that is gradually cultivated. Does this mean we should be totally frivolous and let things run wild? No, it doesn't; it's incorrect to simply let go and get carried away into disturbing emotions and distraction. The basic nature is not something to be cultivated, but it shouldn't be forgotten either. We still need presence of mind. The next line, "How can you be separate or not separate!" means that our nature itself is already free from disturbing emotions, free from conceptual thought and obscuration. It does not need to be separated from or divested of anything. Yet, at the same time we cannot possibly be separate from this nature. Even while involved in conceptual thoughts or disturbing emotions, the very identity of this involvement, the essence, is still dharmakaya, so it is never apart or separate.

Student: What is the connection between the "jungle fire" and the yogi?

Rinpoche: The jungle fire is an analogy for the strength and power of the yogi's realization. The denser the jungle is, the stronger the fire will be. If the yogi in actuality experiences the basic nature of Mahamudra, then the more thoughts and emotions he has, the stronger the clarity, the bliss and the experience of the basic wakefulness will be.

Student: Rinpoche, do you, personally, think? That is my first question. The second is that every day we finish with your long-life supplication. Why do you sing along?

Rinpoche: In answer to the first question, I must say that I have no special or superior qualities, nor any extraordinary realization. I do have

thoughts; I have disturbing emotions — I have them all. Just because I give teachings doesn't mean that I have totally realized Mahamudra. What it means is that I have been fortunate to meet some very great masters and to have received pith instructions that I consider extremely profound and beneficial. Out of this appreciation I try to practice them myself, and I feel if other people could understand these instructions, take them to heart and realize what these teaching are, they will receive strong benefit. This is the reason that I give teachings like these on Mahamudra.

About the long-life supplication: my students chant it, and they mean it. They want me to have a long life and good health; which is very nice. Whether it actually helps or not, it's still expressed out of a good heart and a sincere attitude, so from that angle it is very nice. When they're chanting, I feel that there's no point in me sitting quietly. There's no specific value from keeping silent. And as there's no real harm in me joining the chant, I feel like I can just as well sing along. Why not?

Student: What is the cessation of thought like for someone who has realized Mahamudra? Does he become numb and insensitive, like a vegetable or a stone?

Rinpoche: You must realize the difference between 'thought' and 'supreme knowledge'. The Tibetan word for an ordinary thought is *namtog,* which automatically means that there is fixation in terms of feeling something is pleasant or unpleasant; in terms of liking or disliking it. A feeling of attachment or aversion characterizes involvement in *namtog*. Practitioners who have realized Mahamudra do not at all become insensitive like a vegetable or a stone. They experience supreme knowledge, and are fully endowed with the five aspects of wisdom. Everything is known clearly and distinctly, but not in the same way as ordinary thought activity, which conceptualizes, labels, likes and dislikes.

I am happy that you wonder "Will the practice of Mahamudra eliminate conceptual thoughts?" Please use that interest to continue the

practice of Mahamudra, and later you can look back and see: "Are there any thoughts left now, or not?" Then you will clearly know.

Student: Rinpoche, when you talk about uprooting disturbing emotions, does that entail a physical act of abruptly turning about, or is it a mental act to meet the emotion head-on?

Rinpoche: The phrase used is 'mind looking into mind', and the word 'looking' is in the sense of using the eye. This is of course an example, an analogy. What it means is to see directly. We experience the emptiness instantaneously, not in a roundabout way through constructing an idea about it to facilitate understanding. We simply let mind experience directly how its nature is. That is what is meant. Dealing with disturbing emotions can be a direct looking into the identity — or the lack of identity — of that which feels the emotion. It can also be the realization that comes about naturally by growing more accustomed to recognition. So, whether the disturbing emotion is cut through and dissolved at that very moment or whether it already has dissolved and does not arise any more — these two are actually basically the same.

There's a particular and profound reason to use the word 'looking' or 'seeing' rather than 'figuring out' or 'understanding', because this is not merely a personal problem — it's a general problem. When it comes to looking into the nature of mind, most people have a tendency to get caught up in understanding the nature of mind in conceptual terms. This conceptual understanding obscures the direct knowing of the nature. It is remarkable, in a way, that someone who is simple-minded and uneducated often has an easier time understanding instructions in Mahamudra. When he hears the instruction, "Look into your own nature," that person will simply and directly look into his or her own nature, without making too many ideas about it. On the other hand, someone who is educated and clever, will, when told to look, not look immediately. Instead he will conceptualize something to be understood out of that — "This is what I understand and it's such-and-such," and he will create all kinds of labels. Instead of perceiving directly, he tries to deduce from the experience what the nature of

mind is. This problem needs to be overcome. Do not confuse the inferred understanding with the direct experience!

So: is it all right if I sing along with my long-life supplication? [Laughter.]✦

15



EARLIER I EXPLAINED HOW the five disturbing emotions are transformed into the five wisdoms. In connection with that, I will now define the different aspects of mind. The Vaibhashika and the Sautrantika schools of Buddhist philosophy describe mind as being the six collections of consciousness, the six aspects of cognition, while in the Mind-Only School, eight aspects are defined. It is these eight aspects of cognition that, through practice, are transformed into the five wisdoms.

These six or eight aspects of consciousness are, of course, defined by means of intellectual analysis. These divisions are not about external things outside of ourselves, but are various aspects of our inner minds. Knowing about them will help us notice progress in meditation practice when we check to see how our meditation is improving.

The first of these aspects are the five sense consciousnesses, or sense cognitions. Consciousness becomes involved in the five sense objects through the five senses, as I briefly mentioned earlier. Through the eyes there is seeing, through the ears hearing, through the tongue tasting, through the nose smelling, and through the skin tactile sensation takes place. These five sense cognitions happen without any further involvement as to whether what is perceived is good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. No particular concepts are formed within those cognitions

themselves. Therefore it is said that the five sense cognitions are nonconceptual. The sixth aspect is the mind consciousness which performs the function of associating the sense input in terms of past, present and future, good and bad, etc.

The seventh aspect of consciousness is called 'disturbed mind consciousness', and is something that is ongoing. It is definitely a quality of ego-clinging, but is not as pronounced in the way of the thought "I am" as is the sixth consciousness. Rather, the disturbed mind consciousness is like a subtle background noise; an ongoing feeling of holding onto itself. This is present in every situation, whether we are awake or asleep.

The eighth is called the 'all-ground consciousness', or the *alaya-vijnana* in Sanskrit. It is also a type of background consciousness in the sense that it is the ongoing clarity or the conscious quality of mind. The alaya is what allows for any experience to take place, whether there is or isn't any thought involvement, whether or not we are interpreting the input that is presented through the senses. The quality of being able to cognize, to be awake, aware, and so forth, is something which is steady and continuous. Through all our beginningless lifetimes, this all-ground consciousness has been the basis for the habitual tendencies that recreate the different ways we perceive things. This is why it is called the all-ground consciousness.

The seventh and the eighth are called ongoing aspects of consciousness because they are continually present. Of course, all composite things are impermanent, being of a momentary nature, but this moment-to-moment presence of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses is continuous in the sense of being incessantly repeated. When we practice meditation, what is it that practices? It couldn't be the five sense cognitions because they are not always present. When there is seeing, the cognition of sight is present, but when the mind switches away from paying attention to a visual object, there's no seeing; there is no cognition of sight present. Sound cognition is present when we hear a sound, but when we don't hear anything it's no longer present.

There's no steady occurrence of the five sense cognitions at all. They are sporadic, occurring only from time to time. So, when we are asked, "Is it the five sense cognitions who practice meditation?", we have to say, "No, it isn't." They simply occur from time to time in a thought-free or nonconceptual way.

What about the seventh and the eighth aspects, the disturbed mind consciousness and the all-ground consciousness — are they the ones cultivating the meditation state? No, they aren't; because they are, respectively, a vague lack of clarity and a steady ongoing conscious presence. They don't cultivate anything in terms of stillness or insight, shamatha and vipashyana. As we progress through the bhumis, the bodhisattva levels, they are transformed and gradually fade away until they vanish. That's why you can't say that the seventh and eighth consciousnesses are the ones practicing meditation.

So, who or what exactly is it that practices meditation? We have to say it is the mind consciousness, the sixth aspect, which refers to that which thinks. We see sights, and notice various sounds, smells, tastes and textures. Accompanying those experiences is an act of conceptualizing which attaches labels and values to what is perceived — "This is nice, this is not nice." It's the mind consciousness which associates judgments with these sense impressions. Is it conceptual or non-conceptual? It is certainly conceptual, as it creates an untold number of different thoughts, ideas and notions about this and that.

This mind consciousness does not perceive objects directly. The learned masters of the past had a name for what the sixth consciousness apprehends — *dönchi,* which means 'mental image'. This mental image is presented in our mind and is then fused together with all sorts of different associations – for instance the name of the particular object. Let's take the example of a pillar. The sixth consciousness will create the idea of 'pillar' by fusing together a conglomeration of various impressions based on all of one's past memories about different pillars — thin, thick, ornamented and unadorned. These are put together in one generic image which we connect with the word pillar. The sixth

consciousness associates and identifies a certain sense imprint — what is simply presented through the senses — as being a pillar. This is different from the visual cognition, which is simply a direct sense impression of what is present. Sense cognition does not attach any labels or values — it is non-conceptual. it is the mind consciousness which starts to classify and define the current image. Through this process it creates an idea and some structure as to what it is we perceive. It culls memories from the past and premonitions of the future, melts these together with many other things and labels that mix with the name pillar. So, among the eight consciousnesses, only the mind consciousness meditates. In other words, it is the thinker who cultivates the meditation state. Instead of giving in to the normal tendencies of thinking and being involved in emotions; catch hold of the activity of this mind consciousness with attentive presence. Being careful and relaxing this mind consciousness can generate a new habit of being more quiet and less lost in thoughts and concepts. When mind consciousness relaxes and becomes less involved in conceptualizing, that is exactly what is called shamatha, the calm state of concentrated attention.

How is vipashyana or insight cultivated through the sixth consciousness? Up until this point I have said that the sixth consciousness is conceptual, but that only refers to when it is extroverted. Thoughts and concepts are created when it faces away from itself, towards externally perceived objects. When the sixth consciousness is turned on itself, however, it has a non-conceptual, thought-free quality. This is entirely possible because the eight consciousnesses all have a self-knowing capacity; described as *rang-rig* in Tibetan. This quality of 'knowing-by-itself' does not need any other agent in order to know. When we see, we don't need somebody else to tell us that we see. We know that a visible object is being seen. It is the same with the other senses: we naturally hear, smell, taste, and feel. When thoughts and emotions occupy our attention, we know that we are thinking or feeling. This self-knowing is a sense of being naturally aware. What

exactly is it that experiences? What is it that sees when the sixth consciousness is turned on itself to see? There is a direct self-knowing that the experiencer is not made out of anything whatsoever. It's like a breeze moving through empty space. To phrase it another way; there is a seeming yet insubstantial movement that is possible to perceive directly without any inference at all.

Buddhist philosophical logic makes use of an amusing example. It is said that the five sense cognitions are like a mute person who can see objects but can't talk about them. There is a bare seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, with no concepts connected to them. They are direct impressions through the senses. Mind consciousness, on the other hand, is like a very talkative person who is blind. He can describe things quite eloquently, but can't actually see them. Obviously there's a problem here. How do we get these two aspects together? This is where the self-knowing quality comes in. It links together the mute sense cognitions with the blind act of conceptualizing. It creates a connection between the sense impressions and the conceptual mind consciousness.

Practicing meditation is unlike the ordinary state of mind that is always occupied by this and that. When not meditating, there is no real noticing of this naturally cognizant, self-knowing quality. Meditation training means to cultivate, grow used to, and be aware of this self-knowing quality. During the meditation state all the thought activity and general busyness of the sixth consciousness is allowed to calm down, to subside. All eight aspects of consciousness have a peaceful, tranquil quality. During this state it is possible to have clear seeing, in other words, to know this naturally cognizant quality.

How are these consciousnesses transformed into the five wisdoms as we progress in meditation training? The five sense cognitions accomplish the tasks at hand, but in their present ignorant, mistaken state, they function in an imperfect way. When we see, we don't see completeness; we don't see things exactly as they are. Something may be too far away, or concealed; or most often our way of perceiving is

not really correct. It is the same with the other sense impressions. However, as we progress in the meditation state, whatever needs to be carried out is fully and truly done; the tasks are all accomplished. That is why the transformation of the five sense cognitions is called the all-accomplishing wisdom.

The sixth consciousness, the mind consciousness, usually performs the function of discriminating between what is good and evil, pleasant and unpleasant, clinging to and fixating upon the notions we form. This mistakenness falls away and subsides as we gradually transcend it through practice. Eventually the sixth consciousness is transformed into discriminating wisdom.

The seventh, the disturbed mind consciousness, is usually described as subtle ego-clinging that is continually present. This inherent feeling that this 'I' here is more important than that 'other' over there is the basis for disturbing emotions. It is the act of clinging to the duality of perceiver and perceived, to self and other, regarding self as more important than other. The great master Chandrakirti in his *Madhyamaka Avatara* says that the disturbed mind consciousness is transcended at the eighth stage of the bodhisattva path. From that point onwards there is a sense of equality of self and other. Even though duality hasn't totally fallen away, the tendency to regard self more important than other has subsided. It is said that the transformation of the disturbed mind consciousness is the wisdom of equality.

Now we have only the eighth left — the all-ground consciousness, often explained as the basis for habitual tendencies. The habitual tendencies that we created throughout past lifetimes ripen in this life, in the sense that they structure how we hear and see, perceive and think. It is exactly like a fruit ripening, in that something created in the past gradually and naturally unfolds. At the same time we are currently creating new habitual tendencies. Our moment-to-moment frame of mind forms new habitual tendencies that will ripen at some time in the future. The habitual tendency is the cause, the seed. It's just like putting money in a bank. Think of the all-ground consciousness as the

storehouse or the bank where all these tendencies are kept. We speak of two aspects, causal and resultant. When the transformation of the resultant aspect is completed, it is called dharmadhatu wisdom, which is the empty quality. When the cause, the seed quality of this all-ground is transformed, it is called mirror-like wisdom.

Let's go over this once more, briefly. Among these eight aspects of consciousness, that which practices meditation, that which cultivates and performs the training, is the sixth. This mind consciousness also makes most of the mistakes in what we do and how we experience. When we apply the trainings of shamatha and vipashyana to this mind consciousness, the confusion and busyness of thought gradually subsides. We train in knowing the very nature of this consciousness and getting more and more accustomed to realizing exactly how it is. By becoming used to the natural state, this consciousness is liberated. This is why Naropa says: "Without understanding this," — without realizing one's nature — "All possible means can never bring more than temporary liberation." This is the way to be liberated. Trying to accumulate merit and experiencing the results of that merit in samsara does bring temporary freedom, but it is only through realizing the natural state that any permanent liberation is possible.

Third, stating the nature of Mahamudra of indivisibility:

When understanding this nature, what is there to bind
you?
While being undistracted from its continuity,
There is neither a composed nor an uncomposed state
To be cultivated or corrected with a remedy.

The numberless troubles that we undergo, all the hardship and anguish that accompany samsaric states come about from one cause — the lack of knowing our basic nature. All this bewilderment and confusion is due to ignorance. As long as this ignorance persists, we will continue in pain. When we clear up ignorance, all its resultant

problems, obstacles and hindrances no longer occur. Or, as Naropa says, "When understanding this nature, what is there to bind you?"

When training in Mahamudra, we are supposed to practice in a way in which shamatha and vipashyana, stillness and insight, are united. We speak of the samadhi of the meditative practice and the samadhi of post-meditation, when one is walking, sitting, talking, or doing various kinds of physical work. At that time do not to let your mind wander, but be as attentive as you are in your meditation practice. It is especially important to sustain the experience of the nature of mind during the activities of your daily life. This way of training in the samadhi of post-meditation will assist the samadhi of the main practice, the meditation state itself. Likewise, training in the meditation state itself will help improve the samadhi of the post-meditation.

Sustaining the practice of post-meditation is not necessarily that easy for a beginner. It is difficult to mingle the experience of this practice with daily activities, or when involved in disturbing emotions. We find that we get distracted again and again. We forget to practice, or feel it's inconvenient to practice while doing something. Don't give up just because it's hard. The more we persevere in the training, the easier it will be. In the beginning, apply short moments of recognition. Later on, you'll find your ability to remember to practice in daily life situations will naturally increase. There is a definite benefit from training during daily life situations. Practice does not prevent or impede carrying out daily tasks, and at the same time is extremely helpful for progressing in the meditation state itself.

Now we are at the third point about the Mahamudra of conduct, at the line where Naropa says: "While being undistracted from its continuity." While we are training in the experience of the empty and cognizant nature; we are not distracted. Remaining like that, "there is neither a composed nor an uncomposed state." 'Composed' means trying to place the mind in a way in which it stays in equanimity. This is not necessary when recognizing the nature of mind. There is no need to make an extra composed state in addition to being undistracted.

While experiencing the nature of mind, there is no opportunity to be involved in thoughts or emotions, so therefore it is also not an uncomposed state.

Let's look at the next line: "To be cultivated or corrected with a remedy." A beginner inexperienced in the nature of mind may think: "I don't have any great qualities, so I must try to somehow create them through this practice. If I try hard enough, eventually they'll appear." In this way we attempt to bring forth and cultivate something that is not present. Or we might think that, "I have thoughts, but through this practice they can be eliminated," and try to get rid of our thoughts in meditation practice. This is not the way to practice Mahamudra. Please understand this point: It is essential to discern that the nature of mind does not possesses any flaws in the slightest. There is no need to remove any imagined faults. The nature of mind is naturally tranquil, with the quality of luminous wakefulness inherently present. There is no need to put effort into cultivating these qualities either. What we must do is to acknowledge and recognize what is already present, and allow it to be fully realized.

There is still another way in which we could misunderstand this line, by mistakenly thinking that there is nothing to do, no meditation to carry out. To believe it's not necessary to remedy anything by practicing is incorrect. Once again I will repeat: we need to recognize our mind and experience the nature of Mahamudra. However, that which is recognized or experienced is inherently present within our basic nature. From that perspective, it is not necessary to recreate or fabricate what we already possess. This is an essential point. When we engage in meditation training, it may look like we are trying to sit and do something new. It may appear that we are creating a new entity or a sublime state that is not present in our minds. That is not the case. Instead, we are simply relaxing the habit of mistakenness that constantly stirs up confusion and concepts. We are releasing that tendency and letting it dissolve. What we experience is not something new that never was. Rather, it is our intrinsic nature itself.✦

16



IN THIS TEACHING ON THE VIEW, meditation, conduct and fruition of Mahamudra, we have now come to the fourth, the Mahamudra of fruition. There are different results of practice, temporary and ultimate. When training in meditation, we need to distinguish between primary results and experiences and ordinary ones.

Ordinary experiences can take the form of visions which appear in various types and ways. They may feel sublime or be horrible. We could hear voices and have manifold sensations. Ordinary experiences are not to be regarded as amazing, a great virtue, nor as some kind of huge mistake on our part. It is most beneficial if we attribute very little significance to such experiences.

Read *The Rain of Wisdom*, also called *The Ocean of Songs of the Kagyü Masters*. In the chapter on Gampopa's songs, there is the story of how he received oral instructions from Milarepa. Gampopa had incredible experiences. Sometimes he would see the entire mandala of the yidam deity as white or red. Other times he had extraordinary experiences that were immensely pleasant. Occasionally he had downright awful experiences, like having a vision of the hell of black lines. Each time he would relate what he experienced to Milarepa and ask for advice about its meaning. Every time, Milarepa's response was: "This is not

something good, nor is it something bad. Just continue your practice." So Gampopa simply continued his practice.

Milarepa gave an analogy for how to regard these different experiences. If you press your eyeball slightly while looking at the moon, immediately there's a vision of two moons. You might think this is extraordinary. "Hey, normally people only see one moon, but now I see two. This is incredible, a great experience!" Honestly, there is nothing special about that. Somebody else might think: "Oh no, normally people only see one moon and now I see two. I'm in great danger! What do I do about it? Maybe I'm making a big mistake." Milarepa's reply was that these experiences are neither special nor a great danger. They only come about because one is pressing one's eye. It's neither good or bad. In the same way, he instructed Gampopa, "These experiences come about because of focusing wholeheartedly on practice. Since all experiences are mental, all sorts of different visions take place, but they're neither extraordinarily good nor horribly bad. They're just experiences."

If we attach great importance to what or how we feel and experience, we can make it quite unpleasant for ourselves. When good experiences occur, we start to think: "This is extraordinary. I must be someone special!," and become conceited because we had such-and-such an experience. Such pride decreases our diligence in practice, causing an obstacle for progress. Or perhaps the experience we considered as being so important ceases, and we yearn to relive it. We try to recreate it through our practice, thinking: "I want to feel like that again." When we don't, the longing makes us unhappy and creates problems for our practice.

On the other hand, we may become very fearful about our experiences, worrying that what we feel is dangerous. Perhaps we are making a mistake, we feel. While the fear is not that strong in itself, it can become intense once we start to invest all of our attention into that little worry. We can blow it totally out of proportion and become obsessed by it, at which point it does become a big problem. Actually,

though, a little fear about how we feel is nothing special. All we have to think at that time is think, "There is nothing important to worry about. This is simply another experience."

It's also possible to have a sudden experience of emptiness and become either terrified or enthusiastic, feeling, "This is extraordinary — I am remarkable." Or we may have experiences of immense bliss or clarity. These are the three traditional experiences that are mentioned: bliss, clarity and nonthought. In none of these cases is it necessary to attach great value to how we feel. If we do, the attachment itself creates the obstacle. It's best to continue in a way where we feel at peace and tranquil.

The great masters of the past mention that we need to bring everything we encounter onto the path, that we should utilize whatever we meet as the path. The traditional way of describing this practice is the 'four-fold taking as path.' The first of these four is called 'bringing joy and sadness onto the path'. The first one, joy, is when everything is going fine — we are successful; have enjoyments, wealth, good health, and friends. We naturally take joy in that; and feel happy about what is happening in our life. That is of course not such a bad thing, because all sentient beings want to be happy and enjoy. However, once we start to cling to the particular situation that brings us happiness, this fondness for the joy will turn to pain once the situation changes, since everything is impermanent and eventually perishes. Instead of being caught up in the frame of mind that takes joy in these circumstances, we should rather look into the very identity of that which feels happy. We will discover that it is not made out of anything whatsoever. It is empty of any identity. That is called 'bringing joy into the path'.

Conversely, we feel pain when we feel sad or hurt, when we have misfortune or bad health. Often the thoughts come: "This is agonizing. I cannot bear it. It is just too much!" Just as you did with pleasure, look into what it is that feels this sadness. Once again you will not find a concrete entity anywhere. It is empty of any real substance. This is how to utilize joy and sadness as the path.

The second is called 'taking sickness onto the path'. Occasionally we experience physical pain. When our body is sick, it is not a mental state; we actually ache physically. We can neither ignore nor deny that something is wrong with our body. An ordinary person turns their hostility towards the sensation, thinking "I don't like it. I don't want to feel this." The pain then appears to be even more unbearable. As practitioners training in the profound meditation, we should try to bring physical pain into the path, to use it as the path. Severe sickness is not easy to deal with when one is a beginner, but a little pain is not too difficult. For example, if you take your fingers and squeeze them slightly it hurts a tiny bit, it's unpleasant, but not unbearable. At that moment, instead of getting involved in the aversion, look into what is it that feels this dislike, the hurt. As before, we find out that the feeling of pain is not made out of anything. It's empty in essence. While being empty, sensation is still present, but it's not unendurable because it is insubstantial. By experiencing bodily pain in this way, we are not overcome by it, and therefore it is called 'utilizing physical pain as the path'.

The third is called 'utilizing disturbing emotions as path'. Disturbing emotions are unlike mental or physical pain. Our attention directs itself in a coarse, almost concrete way. The strongest disturbing emotions that we have of course are desire, anger, pride, and jealousy. There is also guilt and doubt. When these emotions take over our minds, we feel overpowered; we lose control and get caught up in the negative feelings. Take desire, for example: we become attracted towards some concrete thing in our life or a living being. We may become completely preoccupied with being near that person or possessing that particular object. Desire creates disquiet and restlessness, and we are uncomfortable. It is similar with anger: we feel hostile towards a thing or person. It takes over our focus continuously and makes us deeply disturbed. It's the same with jealousy, pride, guilt, and so forth. These emotions make us uneasy, they unsettle us.

A practitioner needs to bring disturbing emotions onto the path. Instead of getting totally caught up in what we feel so strongly about, look into that which experiences the emotion: "Where is it felt? Where does this feeling arise out of? Where is it right now? How does it look? What is it made out of?" When we fail to find any concrete thing whatsoever, we are utilizing disturbing emotions as path.

The fourth method is called 'bringing the bardo onto the path'. The bardo is the intermediate state between this life and the next. After this life has dissolved and the next rebirth has not yet unfolded, there is an in-between period where the consciousness undergoes various experiences — sounds, colors, lights, and other manifestations. Because of the attachment to the normal events in our lives, we are deeply unsettled and intensely worried when we arrive in the bardo state. We think: "I don't know where to go. Oh no! Where will I take rebirth?" We are terrified and overcome by all sorts of immense anxieties. This situation, the bardo experience, needs to be brought onto the path. Here's how to do this.

As Buddhist practitioners, we should strive to not be like an ordinary person, who wants only to enjoy and be comfortable in this life. An ordinary person, by definition, doesn't give any thought to the fact that sooner or later we all die and whether we like it or not, we arrive in the bardo state. During the bardo ordinary people have nothing to hold onto, and they experience immense fear. Overcome by panic, distress, and despair, they may feel incredible regret for how they spent their life. Their intense uncertainty about what is going to happen to them is terrifying. In order to avoid this, we need to make sure right now that we do not end up totally unprepared for the bardo phenomena. Whether we do or not is entirely in our hands right now. We should repeatedly picture ourselves in the bardo state and imagine how it would be. This will help us to become more settled and self-assured so that we will not be totally bewildered or at a loss as to how to deal with that circumstance. It is extremely beneficial to bring the bardo state onto the path in this way.

Whether we are alive in a physical body or have passed on and are in the bardo state, the most important thing is to be stable-minded and level headed. Be steady in yourselves, and do not become totally overwhelmed by experiences; do not immediately get carried away by whatever takes place. This is an important quality to cultivate. Otherwise, whenever we feel pain or anxiety, we will be totally caught up in it. Train now to be more balanced in your response to your emotions. Cultivating this quality through Dharma practice makes an incredible amount of difference as to whether we take an unfortunate rebirth or a good one. During the bardo state, it is said that we encounter the natural sound of dharmata, the intrinsic and empty lights, colors, and sounds. We can grow accustomed to these right now. Train first by sitting with closed eyes. At first everything is dark and we don't see a thing, but eventually shapes start to appear. There are bits of light that takes different forms, perhaps moving; maybe green, yellow, blue or red. After a while it is possible that these formations of light will start to become bigger. They could even become quite overwhelming, but you should remain completely relaxed. These appearances are not made out of anything. They are insubstantial, and there is no real place that these formations come out of, or dwell. There is nothing to be astonished about; they are merely an expression of the empty nature. Once we grow slightly accustomed to these light formations that are the naturally empty lights of the innate nature, we have developed a kind of steadiness that will help us not to be overcome by the natural lights of dharmata in the bardo.

Similarly, we can grow accustomed to the intrinsic sound of dharmata that occurs in the bardo state by sitting down in a quiet place with no noise and paying attention. We should direct our concentration towards our hearing, not in an extroverted way, but tuning into a subtle sound that is present all by itself. Sometimes it helps to clench your teeth slightly and listen. There is a subtle roaring which you can hear more and more if you focus. It is not the sound of physical things clashing together, like a drum or any outer material objects. It is the

sound of our own nature. When we pay attention, we find that the sound is not coming from anywhere, it remains nowhere, and it is not made out of anything at all. While looking into the identity of this intrinsic sound, there is no identity to find. It's totally insubstantial. Simultaneously, there is the hearing of this sound vividly and distinctly. This is identical in nature with the natural sound of dharmata during the bardo state. If we can relax into the hearing without being apprehensive or caught up in it, we can avoid being overwhelmed by the natural sound of dharmata in the bardo state.

We do encounter all these situations that I have described. We have pleasure, pain, joy and sorrow; we fall sick; we have disturbing emotions; and sooner or later we will have to go through the bardo. We need to accept the inevitability of these things. Not wanting to think about them doesn't help; they will still happen. We need to prepare ourselves for those situations without falling prey to anxiety, fear and unhappiness. It is much better if we become fully capable of encountering all circumstances right now, without being at a loss about what to do and where to go. The key point in all these four situations mentioned is settling into the equanimity of knowing the natural state of mind. The more we train in recognizing our nature, the more accustomed we become. We need to persevere diligently in order to reach proficiency. This is an essential point.

In the Buddhist teachings, everything depends on the karma we created. However, two dominant factors are at play: the ripening of former karma and temporary circumstances. We may have a certain karmic course, but if we fall prey to temporary circumstances, panic, and start to be bewildered in the bardo state, we may make a terribly wrong choice. It's very important to be level-headed so that we can be calm about what we encounter in the bardo state. In this way we don't force ourselves into an unfortunate rebirth. We will have the opportunity to choose, and will be free to exert ourselves in taking the correct rebirth. From this perspective as well, this teaching is extremely important.

Once more, for the three points about the Mahamudra of fruition, first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of what appears and exists:

It is not made out of anything.
Experience self-liberated is dharmadhatu.
Thinking self-liberated is great wisdom.
Nondual equality is dharmakaya.

Let's go back to the text: "It is not made out of anything." The 'it' here refers to any experience you encounter, no matter what it is. There is no concrete substance; everything is empty in essence. Nevertheless, experience occurs unimpededly. The content of experience is a transitory circumstance. Every moment of experience naturally vanishes — "Experience self-liberated is dharmadhatu." The thinker, that which perceives and labels, likewise dissolves by itself — "Thinking self-liberated is great wisdom." Thinking is like a bubble on the surface of water or like a gust of wind: neither is solid. Yet there is a seeming presence of awareness which is not made out of anything whatsoever. Ordinary people do not pay attention to the reality of this. Practitioners should look into that which thinks, and see its insubstantiality; watch the seeming thinker vanishing by itself. This is original wakefulness. In short, the perceived is dharmadhatu, while the perceiver is the luminous wakefulness. Hence, "Nondual equality is dharmakaya."

These two aspects of experience — the perceiver and the perceived — are not only utterly insubstantial and empty of any concrete identity, they are an indivisible unity. This indivisible unity, here described as nondual equality, is the basic state, the reality of experience. Whether we realize it or not, it is our natural state. When through practice it is fully actualized, there's a state of great serenity. That is what is called the dharmakaya, the final fruition.

If you have any questions, feel free to ask.

Student: What's the connection between the bardo state and the eighth consciousness, the all-ground consciousness?

Rinpoche: Where does experience take place? Whether an experience belongs to this life, the next life or the bardo, it unfolds within the all-ground consciousness. The all-ground consciousness is like the environment or atmosphere within which the ripening of past habitual tendencies manifests. It is also the place where the new tendencies we form are kept. For example, a small child, when shown a tiny circle, does not at first have any real ideas connected to that. first he is taught or imprinted with the association of the sound 'O' to the circle. Later on, when he's reading a text, he sees the circle amid other letters and the sound 'O' immediately comes to his mind. It does so spontaneously, without him having to think, question, or ask someone else. It has become a habit to associate a circle with the sound 'O'. It is the same way with all habitual tendencies. The experiences that occur in the bardo state are also structured. Whether they are clear or unclear, or whether we feel at ease about them or uneasy, all depends upon the habitual tendencies that are stored in our all-ground consciousness.

Student: In the context of becoming accustomed to the practice of the natural state in the bardo experiences, is that training stored in the sixth or in the eighth consciousness?

Rinpoche: The predominant aspect of the consciousness that practices is the sixth mind consciousness. This is true whether we are in this life, the next life or in the bardo. The sixth consciousness is what accepts or rejects joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. It creates thoughts about all the different experiences. However, the habitual tendencies formed by doing so are stored within the all-ground consciousness. In the context of bringing the bardo onto the path, we train in relaxing into the natural state while experiencing the intrinsic colors and sounds. The looking into the nature of that which experiences these is the nonconceptual aspect of the sixth consciousness. The habitual tendency for that training, however, is stored in the eighth consciousness.

Student: What are the signs that you are proceeding correctly when you are practicing the path?

Rinpoche: It is generally said that the sign of learning the Dharma is to be peaceful and gentle. The sign of being adept in Dharma practice is to be free of disturbing emotions. What that means is the more we learn about Dharma practice, the more easy-going we should become — gentle, disciplined and self-contained. The more we practice, the more in charge of our minds we should become, not immediately getting caught up in anger if we don't like something. We should be in control and not be immediately overrun by emotions. That is a sure sign of progress on the path.✦

17



AMONG THE THREE POINTS about the Mahamudra of fruition, the first point was about the natural liberation of the perceiver and the perceived. The second point is about the indivisible nature of samsara and nirvana.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of samsara and nirvana:

Like the continuous flow of a great river,
Whatever you do is meaningful.
This is the eternal awakened state,
The great bliss, leaving no place for samsara.

The first line — "Like the continuous flow of a great river," refers to diligence, exerting ourselves. We may be able to recognize the nature of mind; but to sustain it; exertion is necessary. Naropa uses the flow of a great river as an example. A great river flows continuously and effortlessly, at its own natural pace. That is a wonderful image for the type of diligence that is indispensable.

The general teachings mention two kinds of diligence: one is called 'devoted application', and the other 'constant application'. In devoted application, we try our best, our utmost, to apply effort and carry on in that way. Constant application means one is not just diligent for a few

days, weeks, months or years, but continuously, in a sustained way. Devoted application is very important, but a sense of constancy in our exertion, especially in this context of training in the natural state of Mahamudra, is what is needed. The ordinary attitude of being diligent and pushing doesn't allow our exertion to increase and develop.

I will now explain the six types of diligence which the great bodhisattva Shantideva mentions in his *Bodhicharya Avatara*. The first step towards being truly diligent is sincere interest. Sincere interest comes about once we appreciate the value of something, that it's meaningful and worthwhile to pursue. Our attention is directed towards that and we exert ourselves. If we don't really understand the value, it's very hard to be really interested and diligent in accomplishing any task.

The second factor is pride. The word 'pride' figures among the six primary disturbing emotions, but here the meaning is not the same, but rather has the connotation of confidence. It is the self-assurance that "I can do this; it is not impossible; not beyond me. I can practice and train in samadhi. It is meaningful and worthwhile." If we don't have self-confidence and we think "I'm weak, I cannot eradicate my faults or promote good qualities, I cannot practice meditation," it's hard to ever be diligent. On the other hand, if we have a sense of pride that "This is possible, I can do it," we can be diligent.

There's another reason for why we can feel confident in our ability to practice. Think of the life examples of the 84 great mahasiddhas of ancient India, who trained in samadhi in all sorts of different ways and attained accomplishment. As I mentioned before, many of these realized masters had occupations and lived and worked in the world. King Indrabhuti, for example, was very powerful. He had immense wealth and luxuries and many enjoyments. As ruler of a country he had innumerable tasks to attend to. Still, within this situation he focused his mind on the practice of realizing Mahamudra, and in that very lifetime attained supreme accomplishment. So, no matter what situation we find ourselves in; whether overindulgence in luxuries or

overburdened by work, we can still continue and persevere in the practice.

Another example is that of Nagarjuna, an extremely learned great master who wrote many treatises and established various modes of reasoning. We might think that he had to engender immeasurable concepts to figure out and define all these different things. Yet, by looking into the nature of what thinks within all this activity, Nagarjuna was able to continue the training in samadhi and attain supreme accomplishment. Even if one is a scholar and does a lot of intense conceptual thinking, there is the possibility of pursuing and reaching enlightenment.

Tilopa had very low-class jobs like pressing sesame seeds into oil. He even worked as the doorman at a brothel! While doing so, he cast away all pride and continued training in realizing Mahamudra. Later he was known as the mahasiddha Tilopa. Another mahasiddha actually worked as a coolie, digging and carrying dirt. While working he remained mindful, focusing on the practice of realizing the nature of Mahamudra. Eventually he too attained supreme accomplishment.

It makes no difference whether one is male or female. There were female mahasiddhas as well, like the great masters Niguma and Sukhasiddhi, who attained supreme enlightenment and were able to display miraculous powers like flying through the sky. Thinking of all of these great practitioners, we can feel confident that we too can practice.

The basis for being able to persevere, the basis for fortitude, is that all sentient beings do have a buddha nature, an enlightened essence. No matter who one is — whether an inferior or superior person — we all, without any exception, have an enlightened essence. Based on that, good qualities can unfold and negative traits can be eradicated.

That type of perseverance was rooted in mind, our essential buddha nature. The next type is based on our physical situation as human beings. If we were born as another life form where we didn't have these capabilities, we wouldn't be able to persevere in Dharma practice to the

same extent. Right now we possess what is called 'the precious human body' endowed with the eight freedoms and ten riches. We are capable of carrying out what needs to be carried out. We can be diligent in what is meaningful. Therefore, in regard to the body we have at the present time, we can feel confident that we *are* able to practice, and in this way be diligent.

The second factor was pride or self-confidence; the third factor is enthusiasm. If we take pleasure in what we do, it doesn't seem difficult at all and it is easy to be diligent. Watch how children play. When they are engrossed in their games it doesn't matter if it's cold outside or whether they are a little hungry — they are happy to continue playing. Even if the game is difficult they don't mind the difficulty at all; they continue joyfully. In the same way, if we take joy in practice, then no matter what difficulty we encounter it won't seem hard at all. Enthusiasm is thus another factor in diligence.

The next one is the courage that comes from abandonment. Abandoning means not holding onto a particular practice we have become quite good at, thinking that "This is sufficient simply because I have trained in it." For example we may feel very competent in shamatha practice because we have attained some proficiency in it. We might think "Maybe it's not necessary to expand into vipashyana. Why enter a new area that I am not familiar with? Maybe I'd better hold onto what I know and do well in." That is clinging, the opposite of abandonment. When we have a brave escort on the path, we have the courage to proceed further. Courageous abandonment thus helps us to be more diligent.

The next factor for diligence is determination, making up our minds that "What I'm involved in is the main thing, it is significant, I will focus on it." A determined frame of mind helps us to persevere and be diligent.

The last factor, the sixth, is the strength of taking charge. We do not have to feel weakened or victimized by samsaric tendencies – this is our own choice. We shouldn't feel lazy and excuse ourselves by

thinking, "I'm sorry, I can't help it; it is not within my power to do much." We should instead take charge of our lives, deciding what to focus our attention on. Whether we will allow ourselves to be lazy or not is basically in our own hands. The strength of taking charge allows us to carry on with practice, to persevere and be diligent.

When Naropa describes being diligent in the sense of "the continuous flow of a great river," it means not to lose presence of mind in any given moment. Always try to be alert and attentive, and frequently remind yourself to practice. It doesn't matter what position we have in life. Simply continuing the practice, being mindful and diligent, we can carry on like a river.

"Whatever you do is meaningful," means that by acting in this way, our lives will have some consequence, some meaning. Keeping the continuous awareness of the nature of mind is itself what is called the eternal awakened state — eternal in the sense of being uninterrupted. 'Awakened state' here means the real buddha. In the continuity of that awakened state there is no room for ignorance. There is no opportunity for any samsaric state to occur with all its accompanying suffering and misery. This is why it is called "the great bliss, leaving no room for samsara."

Maybe some doubts are surfacing at this point. For example, you might think that understanding all outer things to be empty and devoid of concrete nature, as well as understanding the perceiver to be free of any substantial identity, could exclude the possibility of compassion. One might worry that through realizing emptiness one might become uncompassionate, heartless and cruel. That's not the case at all. For the individual, all suffering vanishes when the nature of mind is realized. The absence of personal suffering is in itself great bliss. Unfortunately it is not the same for others, who still experience suffering, even though they have the same essential enlightened nature. The Third Karmapa said that the essence of all beings is continuously the awakened state, just as what the practitioner realizes. Even though their nature is the awakened state, it doesn't help much if they are unaware or ignorant of

it. In most situations sentient beings are unable to realize how the nature of their mind is. Seeing that, one cannot help but feel compassion.

Another reason we do not become uncompassionate from practicing Mahamudra is that we are practicing within the framework of the bodhisattva vow. Even at the beginning stage when compassion does not spontaneously arise out of realization, we can still generate compassion through developing bodhichitta. All sentient beings possess the enlightened essence, and are therefore able to be enlightened. They are able to train in the state of samadhi and fully realize it. However, certain circumstances must be complete for them to understand how to train. Maybe they don't have even the interest or the merit to learn how to practice. If that is the case, realization will be very difficult. Thinking of this again, even in a conceptual way, we can feel compassion. Thus, from both the relative and the ultimate points of view, we can be compassionate while practicing Mahamudra.

On the other hand, we might fear that compassion prevents realization, feeling that being compassionate could prove to be a stumbling block for understanding emptiness. It is not like that either. Whether we practice Mahamudra or Dzogchen, in the moment of being compassionate, we can look into what it is that feels compassion. Whether it is a natural compassion or a generated one, the moment we look, we see that there is no entity to find. As the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje said: "In the moment of love, the empty essence dawns nakedly." When feeling love and compassion for others, that which feels compassion is not some kind of hard, solid lump or blob. It is totally insubstantial, as in the case of any other emotional or conceptual state. By looking towards that which feels compassion, we can realize this emptiness in actuality. In this way, emptiness and compassion are indivisible. By progressing in our practice of the natural state and developing further compassion, we accomplish the benefit of ourselves by cultivating insight into emptiness. Through cultivating great com-

passion, we will be able to undertake the immense task of accomplishing the benefit of others.

If you have any questions, please ask.

Student: When there is perception, is it the self-knowing quality of mind that apprehends? Is it the same principle for both conceptual and non-conceptual experiences?

Rinpoche: The word self-knowing, *rang-rig* in Tibetan, is defined as 'one's mind not being hidden from oneself'. In other words, you can say your personal cognition is not hidden from yourself; but is 'self-known'. When you see something, you don't have to be told that you see it — you know that you see. You don't have to wonder, "Am I really seeing the pillar or not?," or wait for someone else to tell you, "Now you are seeing a pillar." That is the self-knowing quality. Whether the experience is conceptual or non-conceptual doesn't make any difference; it's still self-knowing, or as you might say in English, 'auto-knowing.'

Student: Concerning doubt, isn't it healthy to doubt when making up our minds in problematic situations? Isn't it possible that sometimes in meditation one can resolve problems?

Rinpoche: It depends on the circumstances you're in. If people are waiting for you to apply your attention to a certain problem, you should make up your mind, and solve it in an intelligent way. You should be able to discriminate between what is and is not beneficial, to weigh the possibilities and decide on what is best. Eliminate all doubt, then announce your decision. That's the course to take. In a different situation, nobody is waiting for you to make up your mind. You're simply sitting on your meditation cushion and your mind keeps churning: "Maybe I should do this. Maybe I should do that. I wonder. I'm not really sure." Such a situation, when no imminent decision needs to be taken, yet doubt keeps developing, creates an obstacle for meditation practice. At that point, it's much better to look into who is

it that doubts. Dissolve the doubt by recognizing its empty essence and relax into the calm, quiet state.

Student: If I am unable to experience emptiness and compassion in an indivisible and united way, should I alternate between the two?

Rinpoche: It is important to know from the beginning that emptiness and compassion neither alternate nor obstruct one another. It's not like we can experience one without the other. If we maintain that it's only necessary to focus on emptiness, that compassion doesn't matter; we will go in a wrong direction. If we think that the most important thing is to be loving and kind, and that understanding emptiness is not important; we will likewise go in a wrong direction. Even if at present you are not able to experience emptiness and compassion in an indivisible way, it doesn't matter that much. Just continue the practice. Sometimes recognize emptiness, and sometimes cultivate compassion. As we train repeatedly we discover that within emptiness there is the possibility of having full compassion for all sentient beings. Likewise, being compassionate doesn't prevent insight into the empty nature of all phenomena. Gradually you will realize the state of original wakefulness in which emptiness and compassion are indivisible.

Student: It seems that enlightenment is far away. How can we explain it in an understandable fashion to our children?

Rinpoche: On one hand, we may believe that enlightenment is far away, that it takes a long time. It's true that if we don't practice, it is extremely far away. However, if we practice continuously and steadily, the state of enlightenment, the awakened state, will draw closer. The point is simply to practice as much as you can. I don't feel there is any particular special way to make understanding emptiness easier for children. It is more a matter of allowing them to decide to practice by themselves when they grow up. That is quite good.

Student: I have a question from the text. I understand that it's a mistake to believe in eternalism or nihilism, but herein the text it says: "This is

the eternal awakened state." How is that different from the misconception of eternalism?

Rinpoche: The view of eternalism is the idea that things last forever, and this belief obstructs the understanding that all composite things are impermanent. Falling into the extreme of permanence thus becomes a hindrance. The view of nihilism maintains that there is no consequence to one's actions; and that there is nothing after death. Using these definitions, the understanding of the awakened state doesn't fall into the extreme of eternalism. Simply because it's the original, primordial, basic state doesn't mean that it's eternalistic.✦

18



WE HAVE NOW COME TO THE THIRD POINT about the Mahamudra of fruition, called "stating the nature of the Mahamudra of ultimate perfection," which means the ultimate result.

> All things are empty of their own identities.
> The concept fixed on emptiness has dissolved in itself.
> Free of concept, holding nothing in mind;
> Is, itself, the path of all buddhas.

In the first line, 'all things' includes both entities made out of physical substance that we perceive as well as the consciousness that cognizes and perceives. Both physical things and consciousness are devoid of individual identity. When we closely inspect any particular entity, we find every single one of them are composed of many parts. It's only in our minds that we apprehend things as being singular. Actually, they are a composite of many smaller sections. When we look at the smaller parts, we find they are also a composite, and so on and so on, down to the tiniest atom. When we examine the atom we find that even an atom, literally an indivisible particle, does not withstand our scrutiny — it doesn't hold up as being a single entity either. It is as insubstantial as a bubble. Therefore, as Naropa says, all things are empty of their own identities.

Secondly, consciousness is similarly empty of its own identity. There is no concrete substance to it. There are two ways that we can establish this. One is through direct experience, turning consciousness directly onto itself to look directly into what it is that experiences. In that moment, we do not find any concrete entity that experiences. We see it in actuality as being empty of any definite substance.

The other way is through reasoning, which also allows us to find certainty about the emptiness of consciousness. Normally we think of 'my mind' as a continuity that is sustained from the past into the present, and through the present into the future. We decide conceptually that 'my consciousness' is one singular entity. In fact, this is mistaken. Those instances of consciousness which occurred in the past are gone and have ceased. Future moments of consciousness have not yet occurred, so they cannot be said to be right now. The present moment of experience, no matter how short or subtle it might be, must have a beginning, a middle and an end. If the moment has any duration at all, it can be divided into parts that belong to the past, are present right now, and are connected to the future. However intelligently or minutely we search, we are at a loss to find a real continuous 'thing' that is the perceiving consciousness. In this way, through reasoning, we can conclude that consciousness is empty of its own identity.

As a side remark, the word 'all things' in Tibetan is *chö,* in Sanskrit *dharma* with a small 'd'. The word dharma has many connotations. Sometimes dharma refers to that which needs to be applied in practice, while other times it means the teachings of the awakened ones. Dharma can also mean knowable entities, anything that can be known or experienced. That is the connotation here; the word 'dharma' refers to knowable entities like physical things and consciousness.

The statement in the second line is that "conceptual mind fixed on emptiness has dissolved in itself." We can understand that all things are empty of their own identities. However, to rigidly hold onto the concept 'everything is empty' is definitely no good. As the great Mahasiddha Saraha said, "To believe that things are concrete is to be as

stupid as an ox." Attaching concrete existence to that which doesn't have it is as foolish and ignorant as the perception of an ox. However, Saraha adds, "If one fixates on the idea of emptiness, that is even more deluded."

The idea 'all things are empty or insubstantial' is dependent upon and negates the idea that things are concrete and substantial. Without the original premise, 'all things are substantial,' — which is untrue — there couldn't be the opposite idea that they aren't. These two concepts, substantial and insubstantial, are thus mutually dependent. The great bodhisattva Shantideva gave an example for this type of mutual dependency. A woman falls asleep and dreams that she had a child. first there is the idea that something is. Later in the same dream, the child dies. Based on the idea that there was a child, there idea arises that there isn't a child anymore. But remember, both are false — because no child was ever born! After all, it's a dream. In the same way, no child died either. There is no real birth, and no real death. This example shows us how, since all things do not really exist to begin with, it is equally deluded to hold onto the concept that "things are unreal" The concept of emptiness must be dissolved as well, but naturally.

Through using reason and logic, we can settle with certainty that everything is empty of its own identities, both things as well as consciousness. In Mahamudra practice, we do not reason intellectually. Rather the training is simply to let consciousness look directly into itself and see that there is no concrete entity which perceives or which experiences. Mind is empty of any identity, any concrete essence. Not only is it empty — there is a natural quality of being conscious, awake. This lucidity is a cognizance which is always present throughout all states. Likewise, this conscious or cognizant quality is not made out of any concrete identity either. Through seeing this directly, any concept of emptiness vanishes.

In Mahamudra training it is possible to go astray in three particular ways. The first of these three is called 'the basic straying from the nature of emptiness'. One thinks that the emptiness of the nature of all

things is an absence of what already is. This is a mistaken idea. Emptiness is not like the normal concept 'empty', which means 'nothing'. An empty room means there are no things in the room. but emptiness does not imply that something has to be totally absent to be empty. Rather, it is that all things are already empty by nature. The true state of all things is inherently emptiness, and this emptiness is indivisible from dependent origination. One does not prevent the other. The emptiness of mind does not block off its cognizant quality. While perceiving, this cognizant quality is at the same time empty of any concrete substance. It's unconfined. By understanding in this way, we avoid slipping into 'the straying of emptiness as to the nature of things'.

The next way of going astray is called 'basic straying into generelizing emptiness'. When this occurs, your attention moves into a thought or a disturbing emotion; and you remind yourself, "This thought is emptiness!" This method superimposes emptiness on top of the thought or the emotion, rather than directly seeing the emptiness that is naturally present. Of course it's not totally bad to remind ourselves of emptiness, but this way of impressing emptiness on top of thoughts and emotions prevents us from seeing emptiness in actuality.

The third type is 'emptiness straying into the remedy.' In this case, when we get attached or angry, we think "I shouldn't be feeling angry or attached. The object of my desire or anger is emptiness, so I should give up this anger or attachment." Objects are certainly empty of any true existence, but using the idea of emptiness as a remedy is not a totally effective way to realize the natural state of emptiness.

Rather than training in the three ways of going astray, we should, as Naropa says, allow ourselves to be "free of concept, holding nothing in mind." We should understand that there is no such 'thing' as an emptiness that can be held in mind as an object. Acknowledge this to be as it is, and do not hold anything in mind. Then there is nothing that needs to be pinpointed as being emptiness. As the text says, that "is, itself, the path of all buddhas." All buddhas of the past, any awakened ones in the

present, and any buddha appearing in the future will all traverse exactly this same path of being free of concepts and holding nothing whatsoever in mind.

As you know, Milarepa sang many songs, which were very pithy and extremely beneficial to those who listened and understood. Among these songs is one he sang for a woman called Paltabum. In the song she is referred to as Nyama Paltabum. The word *nyama*, maiden, has a special connotation of being a female lay practitioner. In those days, there were women who would practice a lot but still led the life of lay people. They took vows to do intensive practice on the 8th or the 15th or the 30th day of the Tibetan month, and in between they would carry on their normal work. Milarepa had many such disciples. Paltabum was very bright and devoted and she asked Milarepa many questions. One of the responses he gave her is in the form of a song that I would like to share with you now.

Paltabum had asked Milarepa: "Who is your teacher? What teachings did you receive? Having received teachings, where did you practice? How did you practice? Having practiced, what kind of realization have you achieved? What disciples do you have?" Milarepa's reply combined an outer, inner and innermost level of meaning. He sang about what he himself practiced, how he practiced, where he practiced, how his state of realization was, and so on.

Paltabum also asked questions about how she herself, being an ordinary woman, could combine Dharma practice with her daily life. As she related, "In the daytime I have to work, at nighttime I sleep, in the morning and evening I need to cook. I am a servant to all these tasks that fill up my life. In spite of this, I still want to practice. How can I do this? Please give me some advice."

In reply, Milarepa sang a song of four analogies and one meaning, five points. first he said: "Look at the mountain. The mountain is unshakable. Like that, train in being like a mountain, always steady and stable." Then he said: "Look at the sun and the moon. Though sometimes covered by clouds and haze, the sun and the moon in them-

selves never change; their brilliance doesn't increase or decrease, they're forever the same. Train yourself in being constant, without waxing and waning." The third analogy he gave was: "Look at the sky. Space is not made out of anything. Its nature is empty, and has neither center nor edge. Train yourself in being free from center and edge." Then he said: "Look at the great lake: Though its surface ripples, the body of water remains unwavering. Train yourself in being unwavering." finally he gave the fifth point, the meaning, singing, "Your mind is the most important. Simply settle into yourself and look into your mind. Without being carried away by thoughts about this and that, be totally steady and meditate. That is the heart essence of meditation."

Paltabum connected her next questions with the analogies Milarepa had just given. She said: "I can at times train in being as stable as a mountain. However, on the mountain various plants, shrubs and trees grow. What should I do? I can at times practice in a way which is unchanging like the brilliance of the sun and moon. But occasionally the sun and moon are eclipsed. When that happens, what should I do? I can at times train in being as steady and unchanging as the sky, but sometimes many clouds gather. At that time, what should I do? I can train in being as stable as the ocean, but sometimes great waves appear. At that time what should I do? In the same way, when I'm simply looking into mind, sometimes many thoughts come. At that time what should I do?"

Milarepa's reply continued with these themes. He said: "When you practice in a way that is like a mountain, remember this; shrubs, trees and plants grow naturally on the mountain, sprouting, growing and perishing there. This arising, dwelling and ceasing of growth does not change the mountain in any way whatsoever. It is merely different expressions that don't affect the stability of the mountain at all.

"Sometimes you are able to practice in a way that is unchanging, like the brilliance of the sun and moon. However, remember that the eclipsing of the sun and moon is not real and constant; it's a momentary event that does not any have concrete substance in itself. It

vanishes. It's only the different expressions of the sun and moon, and does not affect their inherent nature, as they continue to shine naturally.

"Sometimes you are able to practice in a way that is unchanging, like the sky. Remember this: when clouds gather, they do not change the sky itself, no matter how dense or dark they are. The many different types of weather are a varied display, but the sky remains beyond change.

"Although you can practice like the ocean, remember this; when the surface is in turmoil with waves, there is no wave that exists apart from the ocean. It's the ocean itself that manifests different expressions. No wave has a separate identity from the ocean.

"When different thoughts crowd your mind, remember that no thought has any existence separate from the empty cognizance of the mind nature. It is the empty cognizance itself that takes the form of a thought, and is like varying facial expressions or moods, without any separate identity." This is Milarepa's instruction in sustaining the nature of mind.

The practice of the development stage involves visualizing many different details. first imagine the buddhafield, the environment, within which there is an immense celestial palace housing the deity. There could be either a single deity or a chief figure surrounded by a retinue of other deities. These deities wear all sorts of ornaments and rich attire and hold various attributes in their hands. In the center of the heart of the chief figure, visualize the awakened state of mind in the form of a seed syllable. This syllable can be HRIH or TAM or HUNG or any other. At the end of the development stage comes the completion stage, where everything held in mind gradually dissolves. first the buddhafield dissolves into the celestial palace, which dissolves into the deities. All the deities gradually and slowly dissolve into the seed syllable in the heart center. This seed syllable gradually dissolves into light. At the end there is no 'thing' held in mind as a focus. We allow ourselves to

remain like that, not developing anything. This is called 'the method of realizing emptiness through the completion stage'.

This training in the completion stage after dissolving the visualization into emptiness is a little different from the training in the emptiness of Mahamudra, but the end result of realizing that all things are empty of any substantial identity is the same. Thus, as we train more and more, we will find that they are mutually supportive and there is no conflict between them at all.✦

19



SOME TEACHERS KEEP THESE Mahamudra instructions secret, and choose not to teach them openly or widely to just anyone. When they do teach Mahamudra it is only to people who have done a considerable amount of practice, so-called 'worthy recipients'. There are several reasons for doing so. When those who are truly ready to receive these teachings are told how to place their attention, how to settle their mind and train in Mahamudra, there is no problem. The problem comes when, instead of getting down to the heart of the matter, the practitioner spins a web of concepts to create an "understanding" of how to practice. By continuing that way, the person eventually finds that he or she is making little progress. He or she may lose faith or even turn against the teachings, saying, "Mahamudra practice is useless! Nothing comes out of it!" That is a serious problem. If we don't genuinely understand the practice, we should not pretend that we do, or give up, saying: "This is too difficult to assimilate." Rather, we should put effort into achieving both correct understanding and practice. We shouldn't lose courage, but persevere.

Here's another problem some people encounter. We may discover we are talented and easily comprehend the practice of Mahamudra. It seems to immediately fit "our way," and we find we can settle our minds into the state of Mahamudra almost effortlessly. When that

happens, we may start to think we are incredibly special. We may tell ourselves, "I don't need to do anything other than Mahamudra practice. To get involved in accepting good or rejecting evil is an inferior way of practice; it's unimportant. Creating merit is not anything I need to spend my time on." Such a proud attitude can cause a serious predicament. Just because we occasionally glimpse the awakened state, or even have a sustained experience of it, doesn't mean it will continue. There is no guarantee that the experience will deepen or that we will progress. What is essential is to not only have an experience, but to continuously practice in order to deepen and expand that experience. If we think that the point we have reached is sufficient, it's very difficult to progress further. Among the two factors — cause and conditions — the cause is the experience of Mahamudra, but one of the conditions that helps it to develop is to pay close attention to the consequences of our actions. We need to accept good and reject evil deeds, to create merit, purify the obscurations and gather the accumulations. When we do this, we can definitely progress in Mahamudra practice.

To conclude, instructing and stating the dedication:

I have given these concise words of heartfelt advice
For the most fortunate ones.
Through this may every single sentient being
Be established in Mahamudra.

The great pandita Naropa condensed the teachings on Mahamudra into concise words and gave them as heartfelt advice. These teachings are meant for the most fortunate ones, those who have the karmic destiny to enter the Buddhist teachings, and to have the interest, the opportunity, and the capability to apply the teachings. Many people in this world seem to have no inclination towards spiritual practice, and thus lack this fortune. Even among those people interested in Buddhist spiritual practice, it's not everyone who has the ability and opportunity to receive Vajrayana teachings. Among those who enter the gateway of Vajrayana, it's not everyone who can assimilate and trust in the practice

of Mahamudra. Even though they may have the opportunity to receive the teachings, not everyone can actually apply themselves diligently — in other words, have the precious fortune. The teachings here are meant for those people who are the most fortunate ones. Not only have they pursued a spiritual path; they have entered Buddhism. They have met the Vajrayana and most especially are fortunate enough to receive Mahamudra teachings, trust them and apply themselves diligently. It is for these people that Naropa has given this summary of profound guidance.

The great pandita Naropa states "I have given these concise words of heartfelt advice." Naropa bestowed these teachings with great affection and love. Mahamudra instructions can be taught in a very detailed and precise way. In this song, all the aspects of the view, the practice and the stages are explained very succinctly. Teachings like these are very precious and beneficial when one is studying to attain certainty about the view. When it comes to training our mind in Mahamudra, too many details can encumber direct application. To touch base with the practice itself, sometimes it is more helpful to have everything condensed into short, concise words. That way we can remember, understand, and remind ourselves to utilize them from time to time. Naropa has given us a summary of Mahamudra structured as twelve verses — three each for view, meditation, conduct and fruition — plus an extra verse for the conclusion, making thirteen verses altogether.

The teachings of the Buddha and the commentaries of the great panditas are very extensive; vast in their scope and their perspective. It requires a person of broad intelligence to be able to embrace all the meaning contained in the sutras. For this reason, a few of the great masters composed treatises that compressed the immense meaning into a few brief verses. Their efforts were specifically directed to benefit people of later eras, who lack the capacity or simply the time to assimilate the meaning of all the Buddha's words. In the sutras we occasionally find that certain vital points are not fully clarified, and are

even concealed. In order to emphasize what has real importance and to fully bring to light that which was held back by the Buddha, panditas wrote treatises — shastras — that fully disclose the hidden meaning. In this song by Naropa, we have both. The term "heartfelt advice," means he openly revealed his innermost heart to the listener. You can say that he fully uncovered the hidden meaning, the vital points. The word concise implies that the vast meaning is brought together into a few key points.

The first two lines express Naropa's knowledge, his capacity to create a text like this. The next two lines are about compassion. He wrote this out of great love and kindness for all sentient beings. The words he uses are: "Through this may every single sentient being be established in Mahamudra." The benefit of this teaching is not restricted to a certain caste of people, for those from a particular area of a country, or from only a few countries, or even for only human beings. It is meant for every single sentient being, without any exception. His aspiration is that the effect of this teaching may be of benefit to everyone. People are truly benefited by realizing Mahamudra, and all the manifold teachings that the awakened ones give out of skillful means do bring benefit to whoever practices them — there's no doubt about that. Among all the teachings given, the pithiest ones that have the deepest impact and are the simplest to apply are those of Mahamudra.

"May every single sentient being be established in Mahamudra." When Naropa expresses this wish, it is out of compassion. By showing this, he shows us, his followers, how to behave as well. We should follow this example of kindness towards everyone without exception. In our lives, when we look at other beings we see that they suffer in various ways. Some are hungry, some are sick, some have mental problems, others physical ones. Very often people with an altruistic frame of mind feel saddened and frustrated by seeing the suffering in the world. Often they feel the need to do something to help others. Through our compassion we can alleviate suffering to some extent. In

the Buddhist teachings there is the famous wish: "May all beings be free of suffering and the causes of suffering." Not only is it important to alleviate the actual suffering that sentient beings feel; it is essential to work on removing the causes that bring about the experience of pain and misery. The teaching of Mahamudra is exactly what can remove the causes of suffering.

Out of compassion, we should try our best to ensure that the teachings of the Awakened One, the Buddha, do not disappear and vanish. Please work to make the teachings accessible for others, which will ensure that the teachings do not disappear. This is particularly true for the teachings of Mahamudra. Spreading them all over the world makes the actual remedy against suffering and the causes of suffering available. This is a way to express compassion in a true manner. When doing this, it is important not to focus on selfish or materialistic aims, but to act out of a true, kind heart.

In general, compassion is a feeling that is overwhelming. You could call it a deep-felt sadness. It is often described by the great masters as the feeling a crippled mother has when she sees her only child being carried away by a river. She desperately wants to help save her child, but she cannot – she is powerless. That is how the tenderness of compassion in our heart is. It's not totally the same as ordinary frustration or feeling incapacitated or depressed, however, because within this compassion is the understanding that by practicing, one will be able to help others. One thinks, "Since I am a practitioner, the opportunity exists for the virtues I cultivate to be used for the benefit of others." It's not a completely hopeless situation either, as 'boundless joy' is combined within the compassion. It's a happy/sad feeling at the same time; kind of bittersweet.

This was given orally by the great pandita Naropa, to Marpa Chökyi Lodrö at Pullahari.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, Naropa was a great scholar in the first part of his life. He was entrusted with the position

of guarding the northern gate of Nalanda Monastery during the time when the Buddhist teachings truly flourished. The gates to Nalanda functioned as an entry point, and the pandita in charge of each particular gate would sometimes meet with the people who entered. If people came out of sincere interest, the pandita would teach them how to begin Buddhist practice. If they were devoted and wanted further instruction, he would give them further instruction. If someone had doubts or uncertainty, he would clarify them. If someone came to object against Buddhism, to raise controversial points and dispute, the pandita's responsibility would be to defend the Buddhist point of view, to refute any wrong notions.

Remember the story of Naropa's meeting with Vajra Yogini at the northern gate? His encounter with her taught Naropa that he needed to be learned in meaning rather than words. Vajra Yogini told him about the great mahasiddha Tilopa. Simply upon hearing the name Tilopa, Naropa experienced incredible devotion and trust, and the intense wish to meet Tilopa welled up inside him. So he set out to find Tilopa, whom he finally met with and followed. Naropa received the pithy instructions of Mahamudra which he practiced and realized. At some point, Tilopa gave him the prediction that "In the future your chief disciple will be a Tibetan by the name Marpa Chökyi Lodrö. It is to him you should entrust your lineage." That is how we have this text, which was given orally by the great pandita Naropa to the Tibetan Marpa Chökyi Lodrö at Naropa's hermitage at Pullahari.

I would like to add that I am not someone who is accomplished in any significant way. I have neither attained the common nor the supreme siddhis. However, I have met extraordinary masters and received these wonderful teachings, which I consider very precious. I feel that that you students must also value them, as many of you have come from far-away places and have taken quite a bit of trouble to reach Nepal. I am extremely happy for this opportunity to teach Mahamudra to all of you who attended this seminar. It seemed to me that you listened well throughout the teachings, and I am also pleased at how

you practiced during this time. The most important aspect about Mahamudra teachings is not simply to have heard or received them. The real importance lies in applying them — in practicing and training in them. When applied, these teachings will be of immense benefit, not only for oneself, but also for others. When we have trained further and become stable in the practice of Mahamudra, we can undertake the task of helping others to similarly understand. In this sense, the benefit is not limited to ourselves. Since the basis for this lies in practicing, please practice these teachings.✦

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—Erik and Marcia Schmidt

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This translation contains subtle and penetrating wisdom expressed through the age-old tradition of spiritual songs. Two songs by the great Indian master Naropa are explained in detail by Thrangu Rinpoche, a realized Tibetan Buddhist teacher of the present time.

"The basic nature is in itself the state of realization of all buddhas. To fully awaken to this natural state, it is not necessary to go to some other place to reach enlightenment. The state of enlightenment is not extrinsic to ourselves. Buddhahood is not something that will appear suddenly in the future, but exists inherently within ourselves right now."

—Thrangu Rinpoche

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche ranks as one of the foremost masters of the Kagyü lineage. He lives in Kathmandu, Nepal, and teaches in numerous countries around the world. He is the author of *King of Samadhi* (Rangjung Yeshe Publ.) and *The Practice of Tranquillity and Insight* (Shambhala Publ.).



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